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3

Khasi Niam: An Overview

Any society is best understood by the mores and customs woven into its religious fabric. For, religion verily forms the sheet anchor for social conduct and behaviour, more so in technologically less advanced societies. A study of Khasi culture thus becomes complete only alongside a study in detail of the Khasi religion (*Niam*). Moreover, much emphasis is laid on proselytisation. Hence a study of Khasi religion would also help in assessing the impact of the work of missionaries on Khasi society.

Religion has been the subject of different interpretations. Yet, it has been universally accepted as a system of beliefs and practices, found in every culture, that formalises the concept of the relation between man and his environment. Durkheim opines that religion embodies the idea of a supernatural world and of personified supernatural forces.¹ Ceremonies, rituals, and observances are used to communicate with the supernatural, and certain persons are believed to have greater access to these. As Winick rightly observes, since religion creates a group's members in a condition of solidarity and gives a base to social interaction, it is a symbolic statement of the social order.

Religion suggests a system of authority and the dominant view is that it enables us to know what is right. It uses imagination to express itself. Indeed, it is characterised

belief in, and an emotional attitude towards, things or Beings, and a formal role of approach. There are, usually, myths connected with the beliefs. In both the form and content of the beliefs of beliefs may prevail in one society and in another. Among the Khasis, for instance, belief in spirits is connected with belief in numerous other spiritual agencies, such as an ancestor cult or totemism.

Religious beliefs form specially significant features in primitive culture. Tylor's definition of culture or civilization is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom and any other acquired by man as a member of a society. In a similar strain has defined culture to be that complex whole which includes knowledge, beliefs, customs, arts and technology. In tribal life, religion and other facets are inter-linked; these tended to be inseparable in the primitive mind.

Lyngdoh asserted in his talks on 'Khasi Culture'. 'Indeed, the Khasi ethos is best understood by a study of the foundations of the religion; sanctity of the clan and inter-clan relations; belief in the Khasi religion (*Niam*)'.

Two interpretations of the word '*Niam*' are :
 1. *Niam im* : Firm reasons for having a faith.
 2. *Nia ba im* : Living covenant that cannot be broken.
 In fact, it indicates a true world that lives for ever. In itself, various opinions have been given. For example, those of non-Khasi scholars are listed. One names Khasi religion as 'a rather vague cult supposed to live in trees, mountain peaks, etc.' Another names snake-worship connected with human sacrifice. A third interprets the Khasi religion as a form used to avert misfortunes, adding that the Khasis are 'non-worship or a jumble of enchantments and superstitions who are sorcerers.' Gurdon has defined it as 'demonism or spirit worship, or rather, the propitiation of good and bad, on certain occasions, prior to a venture.'⁸ The Census of India 1961 says, 'The Khasis is a rude animism or demon worship. The Khasis themselves have their own

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religion. Bareh's opinion is that Khasi is polytheistic and animistic though in the beginning, monotheistic.⁵ Roy gives the essence of Khasi religion in *Tip Briew*, suggesting that religion is knowledge of God alone, but also of men.⁶ Lyngdoh further elaborates that the Khasi theory of the beginning of all things and in creation concepts in the *Niam* viz, 1. Divinity for the living and 3. Religion for the dead and dead. (illus. 11) Rabon Singh⁷ in his elaboration says that prayers are first offered to God and later to other deities. He opines that monotheism was the key to the method of divination in Khasi religion as suggesting two ways : one for the living, the house of God (*Ing U Blei*) and one for the dead, the ancestral home. God manifests himself in different places, in groves, forests, hillocks, peaks and mountains, these became places of worship. In traditional Khasi religion does have a pantheon of gods. It is wrong to say that Khasi religion is basically animistic as Bareh says.

Bareh contradicts the interpretation of modern scholars as animism, or spirit worship, or invocation of spirits both good and evil, on occasions especially in times of trouble.⁸ He argues that the Khasis, haunted by fear or evil spirits, in his soul the conception of God. But, elsewhere, speaking of Khasi religion, the following expression has been used to study⁹ 'The original religion of the tribe is to be called Animism...the attribution of spirits and phenomena. Their belief will appear to bear in mind their habitat. They believe in gods and goddesses and in devils or evil spirits who bring illness and bring bad luck to the family. The Khasis believe that their religion is a way to show man how to restore the broken link between God and Man. They have a strong belief in *Shaw* (God the Creator). Thus all that they do, sacrifice, prayer, naming of a child, cremation, is just an attempt to find that way back to God.'

be present in all human beings. He gave the
 be monopolised by no clan, village or state.

'He forbade marrying within the clan. He
 also gave free will and the gift of intelligence
 Him there is no caste system. He keeps c
 ck of man. He may reward or He may not
 old or in the next. God intended the brothe
 be universal. The universe, a temporary at
 ne time. Since, when a man dies, he cannot c
 bit of hair, or even a tiny thread, he must ear
 nesty and neither covet nor enjoy the wealth
 ist look towards the eternal house of God,
 lives in a clean manner, he leaves for the ho
 e he will go to the bottom of Hell.'

Roy insists that anything wrong or un-godly
 ep a man away from God. Stealing, claiming
 ything behind the back of others, being cunnin
 ultery (*Klim*), corruption, greed and picking up
 be avoided. Creating enemies is forbidden; pa
 id elders are to be respected. Ill-treatment
 llow-beings is forbidden. Mercy, frankness in
 lk are strongly advised. Idleness is condemn
 inking and indebtedness are to be avoided. T
 a and therefore taboo. The making or kee
 rage at home is forbidden. God is forme
 tempts to symbolise God is foolish and com
 ur away from Truth.

Khasi religion does not believe in the ord
 monasteries, in temples, in pagodas, churches
 ; Lyngdoh insists. Tolerance is the core of th
 does not believe in the monopoly of religious ce
 ne. It respects the basic tenets of all religion
 eligions propagated by the missionaries, Khasi
 claim superiority over other faiths, a point el
 he book. Roy's opinion is that the Khasis be
 created many races and to each he gave
 worship or religion to glorify Him according to
 down from their forefathers.¹¹ The principle
 each religion would be the same. Even in t
 he orthodox Khasi does not attach great impor

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h, or mosque for the fulfilment of his re
ys maximum stress on the observance
deed during this lifetime. Khasi *Niam* is
reflects both man and God.

Khasi oral tradition (*Ki Parom*) corrobor
s of Khasi religion. In the beginning,
n and earth were near each other, and
course with God. While the fact is
uty of man's fall, how he fell into sin is
ions narrate the following Khasi legen
nitors of the Khasis were the seven
new trep) who came down from heav
. At first they stayed on a peak joined to
golden ladder. These seven families prac
occupation given to them by God. They
e *Khyndai trep*; (the nine families associa
messengers) these seven clans never le
ments. The nine messenger clans *visited*
day using the golden ladder which li
. At sunset, they returned to heaven
ladder. Later on, the seven clans int
up the God-given occupation of cult
e their allegiance to God. Because of th
en with earth was severed. Then, the coc
ator. Through his mediation, the conne
red, though not to the same extent a
er, as the saviour and liberator of m
to be the foundation of the Khasi reli
d of the creation of the world is in con
rn of other tribal legends and compares
legends of many recognised religions.
Khasi scholars have expressed an opin
ning, as a result of an inherent fear of gh
propitiated, there was an infiltration o
s, worship of nature emerged and there gr
er of numerous water and mountain
le from foreign invasions, epidemics a
worship was observed from time to ti
and family sacrifices. As per the group
sis perhaps developed a consciousness of

sense of awe towards God emerged—prayers, offerings were offered to Him. Various beliefs grew up about evil spirits who had to be propitiated. The official and propitiatory acts and ceremonies became hereditary. According to the seasons and in harmony with changes in nature, a number of public rejoicings and celebrations came into existence of significance in relation to the natural and supernatural. There were spring festivals, prayers for rain, and coming rain and paddy transplantation ceremonies. Various events in an individual's life from birth to death were associated with supernatural beliefs; and there were various ceremonies and prayers connected with pregnancy, birth, ceremonial purification of the mother and child. There was also a belief in methods and means through which misfortunes could be averted.

U Blei (God) and his feminine counterpart *U Blei* were supreme. God is said to be Omnipotent, Omniscient, and Omnipresent. The following epithets were used:

dominance of the monotheistic trait in the Khasi religion.

1. *U Blei U Trai Kynrad*: God the Infinite.
2. *U Blei U Nongbuh Nongthaw*: God the Everlasting.
3. *U Blei U Shihajar Nguh*: God the Overruler.
4. *U Blei U Nongsam Nongbuh Bynta*: God the Controller of Human Fate.
5. *U Blei Noirang Nathian*: God the Omnipotent.

Most of the rites and sacrifices were cited in connection with *U Blei* and through her, the Khasis cited the attributes of God, divine providence and forgiveness. She was an embodiment of the divine law and was believed to bring material prosperity and spiritual happiness. She was believed to empower and punish the devils and wicked men and to protect the human soul. Mac-Cormack¹⁴ mentions the great Khasi deities who in reality, were aspects of the great Deity. Informants from Nongkrem and Nongkrem (err) also spoke of a few other deities: *U Blei* the Father, an incarnation of kindness; *U Blei* the Mother, the hearth (generally called *Khuri*) and *U Blei* the Earth deity. Barch tells us that some deities

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Khyrdop meaning gods of highways associated with the state, and some were known as deities.¹⁵ Among other personified deities *Phan Khrpad* were believed to destroy and exterminate evil spirits and ghosts, the God of burial. The deity was disclosed by name and was considered to be propitiated with sacrifices by members of the family as well as by some priestly class members over the peak. The *Kyllang* rock was a warrior deity who is believed to have fought against another deity of the *Sympet*. This is another renowned deity propitiated by the *Swer* family. The *Rilang* river on the west was propitiated by the *sylems* of the west on its banks. Thus, the good and evil deities of the region were the basic foundation of the culture of the Khasis from two angles. The bond of religion brought the Khasis together. It was also used as a therapy to deal with angry or evil deities who require propitiation by other powerful evil deities, who when propitiated became a person's enemies.

Angry spiritual powers were *U Rih*, who brought cholera. These were appeased by offerings. Offerings of a fowl or other spirits—*Thynrei* and *Sapa*. *U Sian* god of small-pox was not appeased. Causes were ascertained by divination.

MacCormack describes three categories of 'evil' deities.¹⁶ These three, mentioned earlier, protect places (such as villages, groves or fields) and deities of measles and small-pox. The deities of the first two categories are simply 'Mother or Goddess.' The earth is peopled by two types of demons and water demons who cause all natural and otherwise inexplicable events, and are instruments of sorcerers. Apart from their presence in dreams, the Khasis attached significance to mystic numbers, and to the colours.

Belief in evil spirits was so strong that it

to houses, waters, farms or jungles believed in them. Sacred groves believed to be inhabited till preserved. In spite of this, to conclude one, that Khasi religion is a crude form of animism is correct.¹⁷

The influence of Hindu deities is evident on *Ka Lei Hukum* or *Synshar* is said by some to be a *Yamsar* of the Hindus. In the village *Shella*, the goddess *Chandi* is still worshipped, but it is only this worship began, although it has been for many centuries. The village *Shella* is the village in the Khasi Hills where a Hindu deity is worshipped of the village and in the form of an image mentioned earlier, the Khasi religion forbids the making of a statue of the deity. Nor is the making of a statue permitted.

Under the influence of the neighbouring Hindu water goddess, *Kupli*, was propitiated. *Biskait* of the Khasis adopted from the Hindu deity the festivity dance of the *Bhoi* area, which is generally believed to be an inter-mixture of Garo and Khasi. Offerings are made to the Goddess *Lukhimai*. The influence of the *Shakti* cult is also felt in the practices of the Khasis in certain areas. Taken up, generally, the nature of Khasi deities, departed members, the Khasi deities are anthropomorphic, and have all the qualities of an ordinary human being. The worshippers believe that the deities grow in strength in course of time; it can be prevented by regular sacrifices¹⁸.

Other influences of Hinduism

Like most other tribal religions, animism is a part of Khasi religion. Tylor, who perhaps, is the originator of 'animism' writes: 'It divides into two great parts of one consistent doctrine: first concerning individual creatures capable of continued life or death or destruction of the body; second concerning spirits, upward to the rank of powerful deities who are believed to effect or control the events of the world.'

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and man's life here and hereafter; and it was they held intercourse with man and received pleasure from human actions. Belief in such spirits, naturally and perhaps inevitably, to active participation, Khasi animism is a basis of popularizing the many movements and changes present in the world of things with the theory of a being which has enough activity to affect human beings as a human being animated by life and will. The belief in the presence of a soul and a future

Life

The Khasis had a definite belief in the here and in death and after life. The earth and everything on it was believed to be created by God and everything had its individual soul. As MacCormack has said, "There is no great earth deity for it was God who created the earth and it is inhabited by the wandering souls of the dead." If full death rites were not performed; the deceased lost his potentiality for enjoying an afterlife and his fate depended on his receiving proper deification from the members of his clan. During a funeral, the village was stopped and every resident participated. For several years, an entire clan gathered to witness the bones of recently deceased sib mates from all over the district being taken to the great clan cairn that was in the district. The eldest daughter, descended from the clan and the youngest daughters. The elaborate funeral, lasting five days, was important; for, when the bones were finally resting with those of his ancestors, it was understood that his soul was taking up its abode in the house of God. This was the "highest bliss".¹⁰

Human Sacrifice

Human sacrifice, a practice common to many primitive societies, existed among the very early Khasis. It was replaced by the burning of human effigies made of animals such as pig, goat or the monkey. In some instances effigies were burnt, or pigs goats

sacrificed before the sowing of seeds, or starting rice (during *Pomblang*) sacrifice, or during *phli* water goddess, or when the spirit peased. According to Barch, legends narr sacrifices were associated with the erection of sacrifice was generally during the major festival and these were connected with their livelihood. Any major (state) and minor (village) festival. During sacrifices, communion with according to an eighty-six year old informant animals were sacrificed during the cult of fertility. Offered to *U Blei* to give rain and to look after the dowry was ill and could not attend to her vegetables dressed thus: 'Do not think that I have neglected you; I was not well. Do not have any is then believed that the vegetables would her carefully tended vegetables would.

ancestors-worship

Ancestor-worship was an important feature of the religion. Barch tells that the conception of ancestors maintains the link with the dead by the continuing funeral ceremonies.²¹ The offerings were seasonal, and sometimes made when thought necessary. Doubtful, according to Gurdon.²² The glorification consisted of the appeasement of the deceased by offerings of food and other material presents. This was intimately associated with funeral ceremonies and domestic erections. The ancestors were to be appeased. It was believed to have become supernatural beings, powerful, having enough power to assist and bless the family to grow and prosper. The system aimed at the material and moral happiness of the family. Most of the *Suidnia* (maternal uncle), *U Thawlang* (father's progenitor), *Ka lawbei*, were held in high reverence because they left their marks upon the descendants. These three ancestors were the deities addressed to the ancestors during the ceremonies and funeral ceremonies are not clear. The reverence shown. Regarding ancestors, it is

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ers whether supplication is to generalise secular first ancestors of a Khasi's own matrilineal descent. This distinction does not seem to matter. Properly performed funeral ceremonies and obsequies befall the descendants. Pigs were sacrificed to propitiate and thanksgiving regularly. The idea of family sacrifices and offerings of food and drink to the souls associated with the family cromlech is a common meaning of ancestor-worship is, therefore, clear. The idea of clearing the family of evil contagion, and observing family taboos. Among the Khasis, the idea of Niam was an attempt to keep intact the ties of family. The idea of making such offerings was similar to that of the Javanese, when they offered the *pinda* or rice cakes to the souls of ancestors, *i.e.*, to propitiate the souls of the dead to obtain their help thereby. With reference to the Niam of *Ai Bam* or offering to the spirits of the dead, Sinha has mentioned numerous instances of offerings made to the spirits of deceased ancestors by the Khasis of the Malay Archipelago.²³

The ancient Shinto cult of Japan possesses many features which are common to the ancestor-worship of the Khasis. Funeral ceremonies, for instance. Both the Khasis and the Japanese laid out the dead in the house and performed the funeral ceremony. And, the funeral ceremony was accompanied by music and dancing. Hearn, in his book, tells us that in ancient times, the Japanese performed funeral ceremonies at regular intervals at the tombs of the family and food and drink were the offerings. Sinha remarked that veneration of the dead is a characteristic of tribal piety. He adds further: 'The Khasis, like the spirits of the dead, whose funeral ceremonies were performed, go to the house or garden of God to eat the fruit of betel nut trees; hence the expression *Ai Bam Kwai Ha Ing U Blei* (he who is eating betel nut in his house), the idea of supreme happiness to eat betel nut uninterruptedly.'²⁴

The Khasi greatly respected female ancestors. The Niam is set up to the memory of the dead. The Niam is a woman who represents the clan *maw*

standing stones ranged behind them are dedicated to ancestors on the mother's side. These memorial stones are of the same style and character as the cromlechs found in Western Europe, Northern Africa and Western Asia. They are special elements. According to Frazer most spirits propitiated are female. 'The powers of nature, even the terrible powers of sickness and death, are female. The members of the household are goddesses with whom the members of the clan *Thawlang* is also worshipped.'²⁵ Women act as priestesses as in the State of *Khyrim*.

Ka Jawbei, the primeval ancestress of the Khasis, is most worshipped by the Khasis. She is to them what 'the Mother' is to old Celtic and Teutonic genealogists, and the Khasis for *Ka Jawbei* has an interesting parallel in the goddess, *Brigit* the tribal mother of Brigantes. *Ka Jawbei*, she was canonised and became St. Brigit.

Divination

The divinatory techniques of leading signs from the flight of birds, from the shells or from the viscera of cocks or other animals were employed by Khasi priests before every ritual or ceremony.

Rituals and ceremonies

Rituals formed an important part of Khasi religion. A ritual may be considered in relation to four categories of activities.²⁶

- (a) Ritual concerned with the life of man and his emotion.
- (b) Ritual concerned with physical phenomena.
- (c) Ritual concerned with economic activities.
- (d) Ritual concerned with social structure.

These four categories of rituals in Khasi religion are interrelated. Thus, a relationship between the forces of nature, animals and man was established within the social structure. Physical phenomena and economic activities are interwoven; psychological elements were involved in the occasion that gave rise to ritual. Religion and social

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twined into one fabric; hence any of the
l affect social structure.

Rituals played an important part in the re
Khasis and had both social and super
belief prevailed that any violation would
wed by evil results, without any overt in
of the community. The violation of tabo
in the clan often rendered the offender
believed to result in diseases or even deat
may be inflicted by some supernatural pow
social sanction was that of the organis
community, acting as a whole or through
in groups or individuals. The couple wa
d to leave the village. Another insta
cian who could use his power to bring ab
it; or else, the culprit would have to und

The psychological, social and religious
monies are best understood by realising t
ism in the Khasi religion. Scholars have
festations of intuition, imagination and
as animism. But the message of the r
culture is far deeper than what animism i
of the *anima mundi* based on the phenom
d by an immaterial soul. In tribal conscious
a is pure faith, transcends materialism and
mere attribution of a living soul to inani
ively experiences the spiritual basis of all
esses of this experience do not encourage
rel, dogma or schism. Metempsychosis (th
e soul of a human being or animal into a
or different species) had taken a firm
as was the case with other primitive tri
of a benevolent Creator and ancestor-wors
and various representatives in stone and
ness of the tribal mind grasp the spiritual
ive process. It looked beyond the mate
possession and acquisition to continuity of
a, to eternity.

The reading of omens is closely cor

the cycle of the individual and nature—the cycle of natural objects and the manifestation of nature from viz. the earthquakes, storms and floods. Mythology, the sun (*Ka Sngi*) was believed to be the moon (*U Bnai*) was a man. A halo round the sun was believed to foretell some pestilence or some comets were called *Khur dii duma* and portended deaths or some great personalities. Eclipses were due to the orbs being swallowed by a toad. An eclipse of the sun was considered inauspicious although a ceremony as such accompanied either hunting or

Certain ceremonies revolved round the important social signs in the life of the individual and religious aspect. The Khasi rituals connected with birth, puberty, marriage and death commonly reflected their social structure.

The birth of a baby was not an occasion for rejoicing when someone died. Having a baby at home was considered a matter of joy. Among the Khasis, marriage was a religious contract and not a social one. Omens were observed before the relevant rituals began. The ceremony of the pouring and mixing of liquor brought by the bride and the groom. When the liquor flowed freely, it was considered a symbol of the union of the couple. Divorce was social in character and legal performances were strictly necessary.

Cremation rites were important. Funeral ceremonies were carefully performed so that the spirit of the deceased should not be obstructed by evil spirits on its journey to the afterlife where in eternal comfort and happiness he would be with the spirits of predecessors. Death ceremonies were elaborate. This ritual began with the sacrifice of a pig and ended with an offering of the betel leaf and nut.

Those dying of accidents were given a special funeral. Deaths were believed to be caused by violation of sacred laws. In the case of deaths caused by small-pox, or deaths in families with sick members, the body was buried and after the epidemic subsided, exhumed and cremated. An important

mony observed in connection with death were the uncalcined bones and ashes of the deceased and their bestowal in the *Mawbah* or grave. The transference of bones from the foundation house of the ancestral mother is a rite with erections and observance of ancestors. *Kew* was the God of burial and special sacrifice to him. The bodies of the deceased *syien* were embalmed in honey mixed with lime juice as preservative.

There was a slight variation in the funeral *ams*

ceremonies associated with thanksgiving. The rituals were performed simultaneously to God

Fire had a significant role to play in the rituals.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it may be taken that the monotheism is prominent in the Khasi religion.

The belief was that God was formless. *Hobbes* tells us that the Bambuti Pygmies of Africa had a similar belief in a kind of vital energy or 'force' as the root of their religion.²⁷ Their notions of divinity are permeated with this idea. The deities are the source and origin of the power. A parallel can be seen in this concept, the Polynesian belief in the god *Kerygura* and the Khasi concept of *U Blei*. If, as *Norbeck* says, the Americans, that religion is regarded as a force about which one feels strongly or deeply. The Khasi religion mirrors a fair image of the monotheistic deity.

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4

Arrival of the Mission

The matri-centred Khasi society living in the stark rugged mountains considered itself timeless. The legend (mentioned in chap 2.) described 7 families in heaven were sent down by God to live on earth. The Khasis maintained their traditional religion for centuries despite the peripheral influence of Hindus and Muslims of the plains to the south whom they traded and who on their part were Christian. Indeed, the influence of neighbouring cultures was only at the fringes of the district where they came into contact with the plains, was minimal; culture represented the pale colours of a river mingling with the retention of the core of Khasi culture transmitted by scholars to tarriance; but, the pride in their culture and implicit pride in their traditions were undoubtedly major factors in the preservation of traditions, beliefs and know-how were passed on from one generation to another by word of mouth. The community had vested authority in a chosen few, the *lyngdohs* and *syiems*, who were obvious in their situation, maintaining their authority and augmenting their power by distortions in the original beliefs over a period of time. The priest could manipulate omens. The validity of the religion was questioned by intelligent minds

sought. But, these mute rumblings against the system never grew into any major force to introduce the system.

The static nature of early Khasi society was a function—socio-religious, and economic. The Khasis were satisfied by a comparatively low level of material practices. Technological advance was almost non-existent. Centuries of stagnation brought about a certain amount of dissatisfaction and a consequent desire for change. Exotic influences began penetrating into the hills as a tiny particle of nacre brings a beautiful pearl. The oyster.

The accidental change that came into the hills was perceptible and initially slow; later, it was more rapid. The British had come to India, and with their advent the Khasis, who had been ruling the hills, were assuming the role of rulers in the plains. In 1765, the adjoining Sylhet district had been brought under the tentacles of British power. Contact between the Khasis and the plainsmen of Sylhet was through the use of the lime quarries, but Khasis were regarded as 'troublesome marauders'.¹ A few incidents that took place in the bordering areas led to the establishment of a British post at the foot of the hills (to hold the mountain people in check) and to the promulgation of a regulation in 1772 prohibiting the movement of arms into the hills. The first British expedition into the hills was the first occasion for the British to enter Khasi hills. In 1784, the first British to march to the Assam plains from Sylhet was Major-General's agent, marched through the Jaintia Hills area towards Assam. At the end of the century of Yandaboo in 1826, Assam was annexed to British India. An administrative need to connect Sylhet with Assam through the Khasi Hills. David Scott negotiated with the *Syiem* of Nongkhlaw for building a road from the hills to the plains. The attack on a British survey party at Nongkhlaw in 1829, resulting in heavy casualties, led to a long war between the hillmen and the British. It culminated in the British annexation of the hills in 1833 and establishment of a cantonment and a police station at Jorrapunjee.

Along with British rule came the evangelists.

AL OF THE MISSIONARY

onaries from the British Isles. Mayhew o
ors and the servants in India of the East
een establishing the friendliest relations wi
onaries. However, when commerce wa
any took a prudent line. The London
ly operating in other parts of the country
e area and sent missionaries here. After
ission closed its activities in the area in 18
there was a split in the mission. The W
odist Mission (later called the Wels
gn Mission) formed the new branch. T
considered entering into the British colon
by accident than by design, it came to the
40, Rev. Tomlin, a man of means, and a
from Malacca, happened to reach *Saitsohpe*
a via Assam. After a stay of nine months
climate was undoubtedly closer to the or
ght the place was ideal for propagation o
spreading the Gospel and strongly recom
ionary Society in London. Rev. Tomlin
were by no small measure actuated by the
in the fringes of the Khasi Hills, due to
ali Christian convert from Calcutta, K
eeded in converting some Khasis around
most literate Khasis among the resident
Rev. Tomlin rightly felt that the nuc
iterate Khasis could be used for inter
nings and philosophy to the local populati
Thus, the first concerted missionary act
Khasi Hills in 1841, with the Welsh Calv
ion establishing a branch at *Cherrapunjee*
quarters of the district. The British mis
come to these areas but for the extension
h provided a protective umbrella.
'Missionary' in this book is being conside
on doing the traditional religious miss
elytisation. It is not the intention here o
is study, to go in detail into the motivation
foreign missionaries to come to these distan
ce it to say that there was ample zeal, a s

purpose, unflinching faith in the cause
 nance that attended the work of these ear
 This chapter,¹ starting with the Christian
 y the various missionary denominations w
 ct after the advent and brief stay of th
 ty, including those locally born, and their
 Table on the next page).

CHRISTIAN MISSIONARIE

Various denominations of Christian missi
 were commenced in the Khasi Hills. T
 red by missionary organisations from
 born locally in the Khasi Hills are s
 7:

FOREIGN INSPIRED CHURCH GROUPS

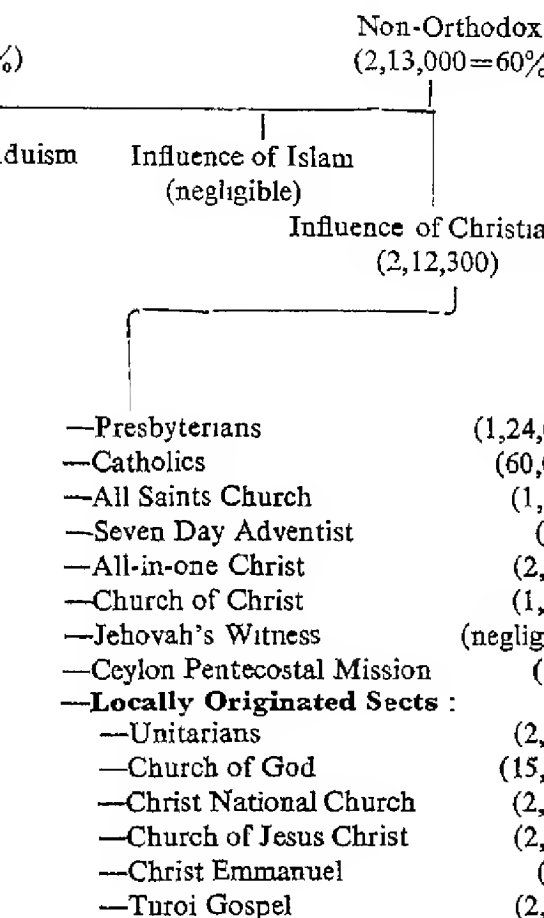
ists

The earliest Christian Mission to arrive i
 the Serampore Baptist Mission² (Ben
 the London Baptist Society. Krishna
 ali disciple of William Carey of the Seramp
 first Protestant convert in India, baptise
 800, was the first convert to arrive h
 a convert thus became the first missionary
 Pal's conversion may be taken as the star
 of directed religious and social chang
 of the advent of the missionary. Pa
 na, on the outskirts of *Bhologanj*, near th
 Hills, in the district of Sylhet. Around
 seven Khasis at the immersion Baptist
Kushiara (near Sylhet) in the presence of a
 ing eight southern Khasi *Syiems*. The
 converts were *U Dewan* and *U Anna*.⁴
 nown conversion in the Khasi Hills. Ba
 Pal preached the Gospel near the mon
 trading centre of *Mawsmat* and the then
 powerful *Mawsmat Syiems*. After workin
 eight months, Pal went back to Calcutta,
 ver, William Carey continued to take in
 n of the Khasis, and with the help of

MISSIONARY

(Bangladesh), took up the task of translating

Religious Sects Among Khasis



relates to Khasis in Khasi Hills only.

x. population figures given in booklets of and
ed from various missions.

ing to census, 1971, it is learnt that there
2,48,000 Christians in Khasi Hills, but as t
her ethnic groups also, such as Garos, etc
strict, the figures given above, obtained
at missions as in 1973, seem more or less co
ect of Khasis.

into the Khasi language using the Bengali script. The Khasis then had no available script of their own, and the attempt was unfruitful as the translators were ill-versed in the use of the complex Bengali script.

For almost ten years thereafter, the Gospel was not preached in the Khasi Hills. In 1829, James Roe, a doctor from Scotland left his military job to give himself to God and to the preaching of Christianity in the Khasi Hills. He influenced the then Agent to the Government, David Scott, to send a missionary to the Khasi Hills. Roe preached in Gauhati and in the Khasi Hills. However, the first to stay was Alexander Lish, a young man sent by William Carey in 1831. Lish worked among the Khasis at *Cherrapunjee*. He opened three schools at *Sawrai*, *Umluh*, and *Umluh*. The number of pupils is reported to be 100. Lish is attributed the first written article on the Khasi language. Six years after this, there was no progress; the schools and Lish himself left. It was not until 1840, the lamp lit by Pal and Carey in the Khasi Hills was extinguished. All funds for this early work in the mission were financed from abroad.

Presbyterian

The Welsh Calvinistic Methodist Mission, which later became the Welsh Presbyterian Foreign Mission, was the base for Christianity in the Khasi Hills. After the Baptists abandoned the area following an unsuccessful start, Rev. Jacob Tomlin came to the Khasi Hills in 1840, on a chance visit during a journey to the Khasi Hills. Here for nine months, he reported his findings to the London Missionary Society, a very orthodox body, which had suffered a split, and the Welsh group formed its own mission—the Welsh Calvinistic Methodist Mission. Though it was low on financial resources, its zeal and commitment of its workers. On the recommendation of Rev. Tomlin, the Khasi Hills Mission sent its first missionaries Rev Thomas Jones

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arrived at *Cherrapunjee* on 22 June. This day is truly a red letter day in the annals of the Khasi Hills. To Rev. Thomas Jones goes the credit for the birth of a modern Khasi society by tapping a latent potential in the society that for so long had remained dormant. This fact has been recorded by another writer, A. J. B. Jones, in his *Jong Ka Balang* and has been corroborated by MacCormack in his writings. MacCormack mentions that a Lish Calvinistic Methodist Missionary came to Cherrapunjee in 1842, but there is a obvious confusion with Rev. Lish, who was a missionary.⁵ The arrival of these missionaries was welcomed by the British forces in *Cherrapunjee*. The British administration apparently felt that the primitive and 'wild' Khasis was through the missionary alone could give.

Jones, a missionary with a clear sense of purpose, overcame the suspicion and distrust of the local people through the support of earlier converts and other dedicated men. He lay to the hearts of men through demonstration. Treading a cautious approach, he began to transcribe the Khasi language. Being a Vedic scholar, he decided to adopt the Roman alphabet to the Khasi phonetic structure by reassigning the sounds to the Latin letters. This suited the language and the script was thus born by the labours of Jones. Two men—*U Duwan Rai* and *U Jingkha* earlier converts—were the language which, hitherto, was only spoken. In a simple and steady manner, new windows to the world in the world around were opened to the Khasis. This is a mark in the evolution of Khasi society. In the future, the like of which was never known. Jones is the father of Khasi literature. The *Cherrapunjee* is today the pan-Khasi dialect for literature. Jones started the first school at *Mawsmait* (Mawmait) in 1842, heralding the beginning of educational institutions in the Khasi Hills. Another school was started at *Mawmluh*. The Khasi teachers were *Lurshai*, and many children collected in Jones's house every week for meeting when some parts of the Bible

them. This was in addition to teaching at the school. The first Khasi book read in the school in 1842 was *First Khasi Reader* followed by *Rhoda*. Jones also taught Khasis how to burn lime. At *Nongsawlia*, Jones first used the saw to cut and the axe had been in vogue for this purpose. Increasingly, the Joneses came to be accepted by the Khasis. Ropmay says that the Khasis, with much enthusiasm requesting his help. The slow but distinct success in the people must have been a great reward to Jones and must have prompted their zeal for work. The many and varied initial difficulties. For instance, when Jones toured the Khasi Hills in 1842, no Britishers had been there before. The people were so hostile and suspicious that their villages were even burnt down and deserted. The Joneses were joined by Rev. and Mrs. Dr Owen Richards in 1843. In the mission at *Cherrapunjee*, 12 children were cared for and the Rev. Dr. Richards, posted at *Cherrapunjee* helped the Missionaries. However, Mrs Lewis encountered great difficulties in starting to educate the women. She was quick to see that in the Khasi Hills, the position of women was different from other places. *Ka Kmie Ka long Khlieh na la* (The mother is the ruler of the kitchen). The criticism against the missionaries was on grounds of religion more than that the woman was the keeper of religion, and in the Khasi Hills, where was the need to take up work in the field as asked.

Proselytisation made a slow start. The first conversions took place on 8 March 1846 were *U Amor* and *U Nong*. Rev. William Lewis recorded this as a great triumph. *Ka Nabon* was the first Khasi woman to become a convert at the instance of the Political Agents and the fortunes upon her due to her conversion were graphically described by Jones.⁷ (On her death her family members wanted to cremate her

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el and a minor civil revolt that ensued, the first Khasi deacon was *K Tira Singh*. In *K Jorkha*, *Ka Phuh*, and *Ka Bir* (who could sh), who were earlier helping in the church. In 1850, the first Christian marriage in the district was solemnised when *Ka Phuh* was married to *U Lu*. The first conversions must have posed many problems and barriers. There was considerable opposition to missionary work. *Apunjes*. Opposition to missionary work grew and became threatening. Every baptism was a source of antagonism and on more than one occasion, baptisms were surrounded by hostile crowds threatening violence. However, after the first few conversions, the task became easier. The ice had been broken and a good example was available, not only as examples but also as persons who would themselves carry on the work. By the end of 1849, conversions proceeded by 19 a year. The number rose to 19. As the missionaries were making headway in the Khasi Hills, they decided that the time was ripe for making rules for the Christian way of life. The basic rule was that every man should give a part of his earnings to the church to make it financially independent. A fund was raised for this purpose and accounts maintained regularly. *Amor* was the treasurer and *Amor* the Secretary. As missionary work made a gradual but definite progress in the Hills, certain superstitions that held sway were slowly but surely shaken. For instance, the belief in divination by breaking an egg could no longer stand. If a man was barren or the *Kur* (clan) would not prosper, it was called and slowly died down. In challenging these superstitions, the local Khasi converts cooperated.

Further efforts were made to extend education. In 1851, a school was opened at *Shella*, a formerly Hinduised village owing to contact with the British, a fact evident from the image of the British flag there. In 1852, there were reports of an attempt to burn down the school by non-Christians. The incident was a setback when *Nimar*, a Christian convert,

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demonstration, the minds of people were free from superstitions and irrational fears. Besides educating the people, the missionaries taught hygiene, and provided medical care. They also resulted in the expansion in the economy, agriculture, and industry and increasing monetisation. By now, the spread of Christianity among the tribes had considerable momentum as many important converts attested the faith. Among these were *Ka Jidom*, a chief of *Sohra*, who embraced Christianity and sent his three daughters at *Mawnai*. From there, the missionaries went to *Tongrwai*, *Mairang*, *Laitdom* and *Nongpoh*. *Sawphra*, the female ruler, *Ka Orman*, a chief, and the Sirdar of *Mawden*; by name *K. J. J. J.* convert. Rev. Griffith Hughes succeeded in converting *Mawden*, village an entirely Christian one, and *Mawden*. After the advent of Christianity, a great improvement was noticeable in the moral fabric of the area. The occasional sufferings of Christians (mostly on Sundays under compulsion) were overcome by the loving and encouragement from the authorities. The Sirdar of *Mawden* issued a proclamation in consonance with the wishes of the missionaries, that nobody should molest a Christian. *Khawng*, a claimant to the position of *Syiem* of *Mawden*, became a convert, and lost the chance of becoming the *Syiem*. It is said, helped the missionaries in many ways. *Durabon*, hated Christians and despised missionaries. A convert, died talking of Christ. Then *Khawng* and also embraced the faith. Despite the missionaries being from the same country, and, their relations with the ruling British authorities congenial. Rev. Thomas Jones, the first missionary, had a misunderstanding with one of the officials of the district, poor and sickly. He was a man of trade trading with the plains people and engaged in business. He managed to reach Calcutta with the help of the Sirdar's house on 16th September 1849.⁹ Sir *John*, another missionary who came to the district, intended to start a college in *Mawkhaw*, Shillong, but it caused despair and tested the will of the

missionary contracted a serious type of fever in the *Bhoi* area and died along with his clerk behind. Braving these difficulties, however, the early missionaries devoted themselves to their work with admirable perseverance.

In 1879, Rev. Griffith opened a dispensary marking the beginning of medical work of the Mission. In building of churches, donations came from the Viceroy of India, the local people and others. Churches were built at *Nongsawlia*, *Shillong* of the Khasi Hills. During 1870-1880, the number of churches grew three-fold. When *Kine Singh*, *sawphra* (*Nongkhlaw*) wanted to become a *syiem* (counsellors) and *bakhraws* (Noblemen) would lose his *Syiemship* and advised him to renounce his subjects. *Kine Singh* became a *Christian* and brought a vote of ten to one for conversion. He became a deacon of the *Mairang* church and later a *Syiem* by the Britishers in recognition of his services in ruling his area.

During 1878-1888, the number of conversions of the Khasi Hills, increased from 203 to 1,250. More Welsh missionaries came to help in the leading organisation. During this year, a *theological school* (now a college) was set up at *Cherrapunji* with *Mr. Griffith* as Principal, to train local Khasis in the Christian faith. He has given the following table of statistics:

	1861	1871
Churches and preaching places	16	33
Number of students in school	290	1250
Number of people who came to preaching	500	900

Solomon Blah and *Dohori Ropmay* (1898) were the first Christian graduates of the Calcutta University. The first Khasi matriculate girl of the 'C. M. S. School' (und 1900) In 1906 a Training School

ished at *Jaiaw*. Institutions run by the Church and in a period of 60 years, the Church local leaders to preach the Gospel.

Joel Gatphoh had introduced in some churches at *Kham* the unique method of collecting church by way of contribution of a hand during morning and evening; this was popularised in the hills at the end of every month or so and Christians would pay handsome amounts for the same, considered to be a gift of God. The practice has been adopted by other Christian sects. In 1901, 9% of the Khasis were Christian, nearly all the remainder orthodox Khasis. In the census of 1911, out of the population of 13 lakhs, 10% or 10% were Christians. In 1913, Rongmei was converted and his State housed a large number of Christians. With the increase in Christians, a change came about in the attitude of the Khasis. They were earlier shy of going out of the Khasi hills. Khasis joined the labour corps and went to France during World War I (1914-1918). There was an epidemic of influenza in the Khasi Hills, which caused the death of many persons, causing a set-back to the Christianisation of the hills. The Mission had shifted its headquarters to Shillong. It established a hospital at *Jaiaw* and a grant was received from the Government in Shillong. It established a school at *Jaiaw* and a grant was received from William Morris. Till date, this is one of the best schools in the entire north-eastern region of India. Besides the school, the Mission had also set up dispensaries at various places.

An important contribution of the Welsh Mission to the Khasi culture was the introduction of Western music. The introduction of Western music and setting music to the rhythm of the Khasi Christian hymns translated from Welsh and set to the Khasi pattern, were introduced in all the churches. Men and chorus with ease during church services. Men and children alike, even amidst big gatherings, were able to sing because of the habits of going to church. The music imparted there. On this music as the Khasi culture greatly enriched itself over the years.

prior to 1920, majority of persons in the Goal, Shillong, were non-tribals. But due to the missionaries, increase in the figures of tribals was noticeable. Many local Khasis made handsome gains because of the missionaries. Grants were given by the Government. There were 73 female literates in the Khasi Hills in the age-group of five and above. The Chancellor of Calcutta University was impressed by the Khasi graduates and in 1933, Lord Wellington had been similarly struck by this figure—where there were more than 100, including about 20 women. By 1925, membership of the Protestant church in the Goal was 100 and in 1928, in the *Mawphlang* church was 150. It was said that *Rev. Amirkha* (a Pastor) had to supervise 3 Presbyterian churches. The Shillong Association estimated the number of believers as 45,000. The remaining 100,000 were said to be non-Christian and, with the exception of a few, were illiterate.

In 1902, a church magazine '*Nongialam Kristian*' for spreading the religion was started. It ceased publication in 1910. A new magazine '*Ka Pateng Kristan*' was started in 1911. By this time, Christian Khasi intellectuals were educated and trained in the procedures of the working of politics and other specialised professions. For instance, When partial autonomy was granted in 1936, three candidates elected to the Legislative Council from the Khasi Hills were Christians. In 1937, the first Khasi to pass M.B. Examination was (Miss) Claribell Reade the first lady doctor among the Presbyterians.

In 1941, the Presbyterian Mission celebrated its 100th anniversary in the Khasi Hills. The parent body in Wales and the Khasi Hills Mission should be self-sufficient by 1941. This was possible thanks to an excellent organisation set up.

This Mission, in collaboration with other churches, and under the auspices of the Indian Christian Council (then known as the Assam Christian Council) set up the Union Christian College at Barapeta. In 1953 Rev Bransley Pugh a local mission

VAL OF THE MISSIONARY

Principal of the college and Ivon Simon, a missionary, left his job to be a teacher in the college. The missionaries now provided theological training to local Khasis so that they could assist in evangelical work themselves. A highly developed administrative structure was also built up for the governance of the Assembly at the apex and synods in the intermediate level, including one for Khasi Hills and Jaintia Hills, presbyteries, sub-districts and churches. After baptism, administration of the church and other religious necessities by frequent meetings of the church under him. The day-to-day management of the church including conducting of regular services, Sunday schools, etc. was left to Elders of each church who had been trained by the missionaries. Communion. The church committee and the church members met once a year including the church members. Pastors were fulltime employees and were paid remuneration for their work; the church members worked in an honorary manner. Details of the church including accounts, as also figures regarding the number of believers according to age-groups, etc. were recorded. Elections were held to various committees of the church once a year. This organisational structure encouraged leadership among the Khasis. Therefore, it was possible for the missionaries to take over the entire work of the church. When the Welsh missionaries left after Independence, they added that persons trained by the missionaries were efficient in their work in Government of India. With the Constitution of India coming into force, the declaration of the nation as a secular state and the policy towards the foreign missionaries changed. Preaching by foreign missionaries on the streets and in the open by them was discouraged. A chain reaction of restriction of foreign aid coming to the church in India, the missionaries could come to India to do evangelistic work but only to continue the work done by the missionaries. The Presbyterian church in Assam was already on its own feet. Jones observed that the Government ordered that the Welsh missionaries continue publishing of school text books and

books of the Mission were handed over to the Synod for the purpose of removing parts connected with Christian teachings from the books.¹² With the departure of the Welsh missionaries from the scene, the Mission can be said to have been 'nationalised' now and is manned entirely by local people. The Mission is now called 'Khasi and Jaintia Presbyterian Mission'.

The Welsh Mission worked not only for the Christianisation but also undertook humanitarian work. During 1964 and 1965, when a huge number of refugees poured into the Khasi Hills from nearby East Pakistan (now Bangladesh), this Mission along with others, did excellent work.

Starting with a meagre number of three converts at the end of three years of work in the Khasi Hills in 1845, the work of the Mission has grown by leaps and bounds and the position in the recent past is as follows :

Presbyterian Mission—position as on 31.12.72 in Khasi Hills

Presbyteries	8
Sub-district	70
Pastors	62
Churches	410
Members	1,23,693 of whom 43,963 were women members who had been administered holy communion.
Hospital	1
High Schools	6
Middle English Schools	29
Primary Schools	275 with 14,136 students.
Teachers Training Centres	1
Theological College	1
College	1
Printing Press	1 (in Shillong).

The Mission undertakes work in various fields such as training of rural leaders, voluntary organisations for rural upliftment etc. From the churches alone, about a sum of Rs 3,00,000 per year is collected as contributions. This is in addition to considerably larger sums collected for educational purposes, hospitals, etc.

The phenomenal growth of the Mission could be attributed

the loving service rendered by the initial missionaries, partly to the glamour of official recognition and partly to the conversion of converts. At present, the rate of expansion is due to the intensification of the *Seng Khasi* movement (discussed in Chap. 5) which seeks to revive the traditional culture, the loss of funds, the humanitarian work of the missionaries with less emphasis than the evangelical work and the lack of a large number of non-availability of highly devoted missionaries to the church. Certainly, the work of the Welsh missionaries was a single major cause for the modernisation of the area.

Roman Catholics

The Roman Catholic sect as the second largest Christian sects in the Khasi Hills and the Jaintia Hills. Starting work first at *Laitkynsew* in 1870, the Roman Catholic Mission has since then spread to various parts of the Khasi Hills.¹³ A number of educational institutions, colleges, etc. have been established. While some Catholic orders have been engaged in educational and social welfare activities, others have remained with the Catholic Church. The missionaries mention that the Catholic missionaries in the area of the *Uraons* of *Chainpur* of Chotanagpur made no progress for six years for any real progress in conversion. The case was similar in the Khasi Hills. The Catholic missionaries of the deficiency of the previous missionaries who confined themselves to purely evangelical work, without attending to the moral needs of the inhabitants. Thus, even today, the Catholics first approach the people with medical care, etc., endear themselves to the people and then start the process of conversion to start gradually. The arrival of the Catholics almost 50 years ago in the area, may be partially attributed to the policy of the British rulers not to allow the missionaries to work in the same area and due to the lack of contact with the Catholic Missions. It is only after the Catholic missionaries came to Gauhati in 1845. When attempts were made to go to Tura, the missionaries were killed on their way in the area.

achal Pradesh. The Mission at Gauhati was closed in 1857 due to acute shortage of funds. It was reopened in 1872 and remained at Gauhati till 1890. During this period, priests from Shillong visited Gauhati. The first band of four missionaries, all belonging to the Society of Divine Saviours, arrived in Shillong on 27-2-1890. With the arrival of the first missionaries, real mission work in this area began. The missionaries moved from Gauhati to Cherrapunjee, and not getting a foothold there, they sought the existence of the Presbyterian Missions in Shillong, and established themselves at a place called Jowai. Though Shillong was the centre of the mission, Jowai became more important as a place for the missionaries. It was there that the Salvatorians started their printing press.

At the outbreak of the first World War in 1914, the Salvatorians were considered enemy aliens and were interned in India. On 9, July 1915 for the internment of the missionaries, the Salvatorians had left a precious legacy. In the course of their short stay in Shillong, they had administered over 5,000 baptisms. In the Shillong Parish, there were 813 Catholics of Indian origin and 80 Catechumens. These early missionaries laid the foundation of the Catholic Church in Assam, founded the first schools and their plan has stood the test of time. During 1915-1922, Assam was placed under the administration of Bengal who were short of personnel. Of these, Rev. Fr. Le Ferme, a French missionary, died at Shillong on 19-1-1922 while on a missionary tour in the Bhoi area where he contracted a fever.

The earliest batch of missionaries belonging to the Society of Don Bosco to come to Assam consisted of three from France and Alsace, five from Spain, who sailed from Marseilles, in France, in 1921 and arrived in Shillong on 1-2-1921 after a short stay in Bombay. The Jesuit Fr. F. J. F. at that time gave them a warm welcome. The Christian Brothers had established the first school for boys (1916) the Loretto Sisters had

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the girls (1905), the sisters of our Lady of
phanage for the Khasi girls and a Girl's S
scholars—all of them in Shillong. The M
Khasi Hills, besides Shillong, were: *Wynsew*. In the following year, the Sale
ed in Shillong (1923). The publication
i Catechism was done and the monthly
'*Ka Ing Kristan*' was also revised.

Shillong, the capital of Assam and of the
entre of the activities of the Catholic Ch
is received the Catholic faith before all
of north-east India. In Shillong, the
Mary (1962) and Christ King College (1
0) were established for training the pri
the Salesian Novitiate and House of Stud
al training to local people. The Sister
e Missions and other religious orders for v
iates and Houses of Formation also in Sh
The Nazareth Hospital, a voluntary org
y by local people, was founded in Shillo
d after by the sisters of Christ Jesuits. I
arity by caring for the sick and the disa
on of caste, religion or race. The ho
le dispensary units that visit rural are
ti, Smit, etc. When Government opens a
where Catholics worked earlier, these mi
shift their mobile dispensary to another vi
ent work in caring for the Bangladesh
ri area during 1971. The hospital rece
Government and equipment, medicines and
us voluntary agencies in Poland, Eng
Spain and India. Private donations
and Spain. The local community in S
to raise funds.

The Catholic missionaries have establish
ing School in the St. Mary's College i
ch also runs many High Schools, Prin
sh Schools, and the Don Bosco School, a
stitution in north-east India where the K
afismanship. Khasi boys and girls are

sion to the order. There are 47 Khasi sisters. Khasi boys and young men are also under the care of the Missionaries and religious Houses of Formation. The first Khasi priest was Fr. Elias Hopewell, SDB, who was ordained as a priest in 1941. Catholic missionaries have lived and stayed in interior places. A mission was established in 1971 at *Mawhati* in the *Bhoi* area. A primary school and a dispensary are being run. In the Khasi Hills the Mission has 5 missions with resident priests. A regular chapel is in each parish and also a large number of small chapels in local huts, in various interior villages. Lay school teachers carry on the work in the absence of the priest of the parish visits his jurisdiction to carry out sacraments and other religious work. The Catholics try to reach the hearts of the people by humanitarian work, providing medical care, education, etc. They try to adapt to many rural ways of life such as crafts, agriculture, etc.; and thus are able to reach to the people with modern knowledge. They are more to be found in the hills than earlier Presbyterians. They have their own funds also. The Mission is well-organised. Conversions from Protestants to the Catholics are increasing. A few Catholic priests usually go to areas where conversions have not been fully established. The success of the work, nature, selfless work, easy accessibility and adaptation to local conditions displayed by the missionaries. Conversions to this faith has been quite high. The Welsh Presbyterians had kept more to the traditional ways, probably because they had their families with them. Their officials were socially more close. But when the missionaries started mixing closely with the people, etc., the Presbyterians also changed their ways. The excellent education offered in Catholic schools, where whose children attend these, come in contact with the Catholic priests. Today, the Mission has a few foreigners. Despite their long service, the Mission is an Indian priest. Kerala missionaries form a large portion of the priests and sisters. It is the stability of these persons is lesser than that

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mpression may also be due to the inherent
reigner.

he present position of the Catholic mission
is briefly indicated below:

seminaries and Novitiates—for priests
for nuns

teachers' Training School

Hospitals

homeopathic hospital

home for lepers

colleges

high schools

chapels with priests, most of whom admin
medicines also

chapels in villages

number of followers

Saints' Church

he All Saints' Church, an old missionary
he Anglican Church or Church of E
nd by Henry VIII) commenced its work i
y in order to minister to the spiritual ne
unity.¹⁶ A notice issued in 1839 to Major
Agent to the Governor General for the N
contains the earliest reference to the eccles
in Assam, in which directions were giv
e of baptisms and marriages by public o
velve years the area had been ruled b
pany. The first clergyman from this ch
i Hills was Rev. A. Garstin, Chaplain of
herrapunjee in 1841.

n 1866, Bishop Cotton of Calcutta becam
he efforts of Welsh Presbyterian Missi
stianise the *Kossyaks* (Kasi). Shillong had
istrict headquarters and the Chaplain from
links with Shillong, looked after the ne
69, when Shillong had no roads, and ca
drawn by animals over bridle paths, the
batt, Archdeacon of Calcutta paid a visit
ati In that year the local British resid

ing that a church should be erected in Shillong. The Governor suggested that the residents should contribute money. This became a subject of correspondence between the Government of Bengal and the Bishop of Calcutta, during his first visit to Shillong. He selected the site for the church and the present building is at the same location.

Shillong was growing in importance and became a new province of Assam in 1874. The need for a church was therefore keenly felt. Local contributions and subscriptions came from all over the province. In response to an appeal in 1874 from the vicar-general, the new church was opened around the middle of the afternoon service on the Trinity Sunday. Many Christians and other Khasis. The church was dedicated to the Holy Trinity in 1877. It is obvious that the British religious order of the ruling class at that time received a great deal of support from the government. The Secretary of State sent some books to the vicar-general in recognition of the incumbency of Rev. S. B. Taylor, considered the best man to impart education to children. Later, a school was also started in Shillong. After that, a new church was built in Shillong and it was completed with funds received from the Secretary of State, the Government of India and the Diocesan Earthquake Fund. The church is the centre of Shillong, next to the seat of government. Funds were raised for the church by the British and the Khasis among whom was Lady Hammond, Governor of the Province.

The church started originally for the purpose of meeting the spiritual needs of the Britishers and its indigenous people. Its evangelical work among the Khasis was on a limited scale. The unwritten gentleman's agreement was that while this church would cater to the needs of the Britishers, the Presbyterians would work among the local Khasis. A no-objection certificate was necessary for the Khasis Mission for admission to the All Saints Church. The chaplains were Europeans but since India was taken over the work. The church has a congregation of about 1000 persons in the district.

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nth Day Adventists

This denomination, initiated in Washington, D.C., has an office in Poona in the state of Maharashtra. Pastor Burgis who came here 37 years ago, observed Sunday as the sabbath day. Pastor Burgis initiated such as buying the building and began evangelisation. After his departure, when the work was done, Pastor Ashlock arrived and stayed here. The earlier strength of believers which was estimated to be nearly 500. Of these, most were from other sects of Christianity; only a few were orthodox Khasis. There are nearly 15 churches here.

This movement faced no opposition from the natives. Inquiries reveal that no force or deceit was used in its propagation. That explains why the majority of converts are from other sects; for, they could argue, they were already Christians. Meetings were held at a bungalow in the absence of adequate records, it is difficult to trace the initial and later foreign aid. But since the Indian office of this Mission has been supporting. No grants are taken from Government. Individual donations have been accepted. Meetings are held annually or bi-annually. Taxes, tithes and contributions supplement the Church funds. The movement has slackened mainly due to the paucity of emoluments are not attractive enough; competitive times generate individualistic forces. Many who are in business, are office-going or teachers; they have no time nor the means to preach. This school at *Jowai*, in the adjoining Jaintia Hills, where students are trained in poultry, dairy or carpentry. A wage of 25 naya paise an hour is paid. The students live in the dignity of labour and preaches in the villages. The general opinion voiced was that in the past management was strict and hence, more efficient. A Khasi gardener at the church building remarked that the maintenance of the garden was better when the American missionaries were in charge of the management.

All-in-one Christ

This sect has no parent body abroad. In India the parent body is in West Bengal in Dewagram Nadia. It was started in 1947 by Brother H.R. Sanyal. In the Khasi Hills, a branch was started in 1955 by Brother Biswas. The management of this denomination is entirely in the hands of the Khasis. The main sphere is proselytisation and no schools are maintained. There is neither encouragement nor interference from Government. The Apostles visit various places in the Khasi Hills and Jaintia Hills. The initial strength was about 100 and has now grown to about 1,000 in about 37 villages.

Church of Christ

The parent body of this sect is in America and Canada, Singapore and in India. In the Khasi Hills it was started in 1940 at *Nonglum* by *Satiraja Syiem* of Nongstien. Some Presbyterians coming away from that sect started this church. There was a split in the organisation, and Rev. B. Syiem started another group. Originally, funds and collections came from abroad and were supplemented by weekly church congregations, while the parent body is in America. There are thirteen churches, with about 1,500 believers; a Sunday school and two schools. The splinter body has about 500 followers at *Mawlai Phudmawri*.

The churches are non-denominational and based on the doctrine of Christ and his Apostles as found in the New Testament. There are Canadian missionaries working under the new branch of this sect whereas the parent organisation is run entirely by Khasis.

Jehovah's Witness

An organisation founded very recently, this has about 100 followers. The sect is self-supporting and has no foreign train speakers.

Ceylon Pentecostal Mission

The parent body of this sect in India is in Madras and is in Ceylon. In the Khasi Hills it was started in 1955. It is entirely self-supporting. The believers at present are about 100.

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t 100. The maxims are (1). 'They live by fa
(2). 'Without faith, no man can please Go
Faith homes are managed by this denom
towns and villages with the help of co
workers. There is also one church at Ja
There are thus nine known Christian sects
ed elsewhere in the world or in India, that
i Hills. Of these, the Baptists have alread
s of coverage of area and population, the
n Mission stands out as the biggest, the
ion plays the most important role in the
n and general humanitarian service. Mo
are small. Confined to limited areas and
le, they are yet to make any significant im
as a whole.

LOCALLY BORN CHRISTIAN SECTS

arians

The Unitarian movement in the Khasi
y born. It is unique as the only group o
e of Southeast Asia, though the moveme
inent in America. In the Khasi Hill
pendently and has essentially an Unit
s and manner of worship are universal
arian missionaries came from abroad
ment here and acted as bridge-builders
ons in the world. The early believers
ved the hazards of isolation, poverty and
born at *Cherrapunjee* on 15 June 1865, th
r Singh was self-educated. Through
gn missionaries, he had been converted
nistic Church in early youth. Later, he b
rigid and sectarian character of the Calv
ately, he broke away from the Church a
ous movement, based on principles of u
more egalitarian and tolerant outlook an
sophies of various religions, thus synthe
theistic ideas of the Khasi people. He ai
ove and worship of the one true God

of all men. The movement began around the establishment of a church at *Jowai* (Jaintia) and the opening of schools. Inspired by the bold statement of the Unitarian, Jabes Sunderland, visited the Khasi Hills in 1860. In a span of 12 years, the strength of the movement grew to about 150 and today there are 19 Uniting churches. About 2,000 believers in the Khasi Hills are active. The work undertaken by the Youth and Women's Societies is within the framework of the Union in the sphere of spiritual and vocational education.

Margaret Barr, a foreign Unitary missionary, came to the Hills in 1936. She began her work in Shillong and was later shifted to *Kharang* village, 16 miles South of Shillong. The rural centre has a maternity hospital and a dispensary. After her death in 1973, the curtain closed on a devoted, selfless life. It will thus be seen that the movement was started by a Khasi, it attracted the attention of foreign missionaries also.

In 1923, when *Majom Kissor Singh*, the founder of the movement, had less than 500 souls in ten churches; it has today the estimate is over 2,000.

Church of God

This sect is the most important among the Unitarian sects.¹⁷ It was started in Khasi Hills by Nichols-Roy, an influential person from Shillong who studied in Calcutta where he came under the influence of Unitarian missionaries. He was married to an American woman. Rev. Nichols-Roy was a forceful and energetic man. Along with him many admirers and supporters. Nichols-Roy of Cherrapunjee and Nichols-Roy were the main forces behind the Gospel. They were helped by Unitarian missionaries, Misses Nichols and Mccrie. They made frequent times on lecture-tours. Rev. Nichols-Roy was at the beginning that the believers pay tithes. The church has been self-supporting throughout. It has about 15,000 believers in 223 churches. Primary schools are run in 14 places. The movement is very popular, covers 240 villages.

st National Church

This denomination has no parent body abroad. In the Khasi Hills, it was started in 1921 by Rev. R. J. J. It has been self-supporting from the very beginning, the number of believers was about 2,000.

Work is undertaken in religious and humanitarian organisation has churches in seven parishes. Primary schools are run from the church collections.

ch of Jesus Christ

The sect was started in Shillong in 1932; and the headquarters are at *Jaiaw* Church Road. Present, the number of believers is estimated at 100 churches. But finance is a handicap as even to be raised to meet all the needs the sect faces, especially on the social side.

Work has been undertaken in the spheres of humanitarianism. In the sphere of mission, the Gospel, starting of churches, printing and literature, books, magazines, booklets and tracts have been undertaken. Two Bible correspondence courses are conducted in the Khasi language. In the sphere of social work, care of the poor and deserving cases; medical hospitalisation, distribution of cloth is undertaken. Farmers are helped with seeds and also very much in the lower primary school, under the management of the church, is run at *Unitham*. Land, building and maintenance of the school which is owned by the organisation has been no interference from the Government.

st Emmanuel

Kyrhai Warjri founded this sect in the Khasi Hills. It has no parent body abroad. This denomination has not made much and the progress is slow. The number of believers in the beginning, has now risen to about 100. It is claimed that the number of believers is about 100. It is said that once the followers were led to the deep jungle to wait for the second coming of Christ. When food was over, they were even made to

on, greatly disappointed, the followers
es.

This sect undertakes only proselytising
chies run are at *Malki*, *Mawlai* and *Laitlym*.

Turoi Gospel

The *Turoi Gospel* was formed about 1941,
it in the Church of God. It is claimed that
ased upon spiritual fellowship, rather
ng.

The number of believers is around 2,000
regations or local churches. Pastors look
evangelists preach the Gospel of the Sa
which the ministerial Assembly guides the
ols aided by local people and by the Gov
e sect at *Thanqshalsi* and *Umpyrdeng*. T
ngthening year by year.

NON-CHRISTIAN MISSIONS

Vaishnava Sect

No active efforts were made to preach the
hnavas in the Khasi Hills. The mea
ad imperceptibly among the Khasis here,
Christianity, was due to two factors :

(i) The Khasi traders met some Vaishnavi
res in the plains.

(ii) Some Jatra parties (folk-theatre) co
hnavites visited the border villages in the
ent, not much is known of this sect; its i
ct. The only vestige remaining is in some
shnu sung by the Khasis of *War* area, prom
uised village of *Shella*

Bramo Sazanaj

This sect has been propagated in the J
ry, but its influence was very restricted
per of Bramo believers (around 25) i
ment will become extinct. The main tenet
theism, belief that God is formless, equ
were acceptable to the Khasis. The Brab

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stiff opposition from two quarters—Christian Khasis. But the principal tenets, the cause and service rendered along with preaching medicine, appealed to them.

The Brahmo Samaj has three branches. 1. *Sadharan* Brahmo Samaj. 2. *Naba* Brahmo Samaj. 3. *Naba* Brahmo Samaj. Little is known about the first branch. The second branch, Neelamoni Chakravarty preached in the third branch while Benode Behari Roy, and his wife, preached beliefs of the third branch. It is that the differences in the beliefs of the three branches are minor. Both the missionaries, who were working in *Cherrapunjee*; they helped people with money, medicine and clothes. During the movement nearly 50 years ago, there were nearly 1000 and of these, the followers of *Sadharan* Brahmo Samaj only about 50. Roy died in 1930 and his wife later. Today all that remains of this sect in Brahmo Khasis, tablets commemorating the names of the two missionaries and a prayer book. A Brahmo informant whose father, a Christian, moved to Shella in 1888, said that one Rohini continued the movement after the death of Benode Behari Roy. The movement failed due to paucity of funds.

Another 60-year-old Brahmo Khasi informant, living in Shillong, some Unitarians also helped the movement with finances and ideas. He said that only the basic Brahmo principles, and that among the Khasis, the dances were popular. Most Brahmo Khasis followed the Khasi pattern of bestowing property on their children. There was no restriction on Brahmo Khasis to perform Khasi dances, music and archery, and to speak Khasi language. They worked for the social uplift of the Khasi sect.

Ramakrishna Mission

Swami Lokeshwarananda writes that around 1920, the hey-day of the non-cooperation movement, a young man, an admirer of Ramakrishna and a devotee of the Ramakrishna Mission, began visiting the local branch of the

mon whose ideal of serving mankind appealed to him. He drew from politics, became a monk and changed the name of his name. While undergoing training at the school of Dacca, he learnt that many Khasis were on sending their children to new schools. He was free from the influence of any religious propaganda. He sent his children attending existing schools in the Hills. The schools in the State were managed by the Christians. The books used were all books of Christians. In September 1924, the monk, arrived, penniless, in the Khasi Hills—the place, people and their culture. He identified himself completely with them, shared their food, spoke their language, understood their hopes and aspirations and was soon accepted by them. The monk found that in the Hills, few Khasis were Brahmos and the others were Christians. The former had started a school but it had closed. Encouraging the villagers to decide what they wanted, he helped them to start a school. While he was working for them, he made it plain that he was not a missionary (though missionaries who helped liberally) no more expected from him. The poor Khasis of the Hills were mostly on primitive agriculture, yet they were not without the expense. A night school started for them with great success. This was followed by a day school attended by Hindu and Christian children. In the only single house in *Shella*, he was pained to see how far from Christianity often took place because of poverty and ignorant. The Monk's own motive was not to convert but if a person wanted to accept initiation, he would help. He cautioned the Khasis against separatism as a tribe; but he also stressed that the Khasis should be isolated but in assimilating what was good, from the West and also in integration. After a school at *Shella* was raised to the Middle English level, the *Durbar* (assembly) of the *Shella* confederates was held. Gradually a network of schools spread in the hills. When a school was to be started, the Christians in a body opposed the idea and the Khasis were either luke warm in their enthusiasm or

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Orthodox Khasi donated land. Opposition also overcome. A committee of the leading men of all religions was formed to take down the school. Another monk also offered help. A school was established in Shillong too. Later on, this school became a significant institution embracing a wide range of work. The headquarters of work in the Khasi Hills were established by these two monks laid the foundation in the year 1900 of the Rama Krishna Mission. These two monks, by their tolerance of the Khasis in their own religion and their friendly attitude, dispelled suspicion and antagonism to the missionaries.

In the year 1959, Tarani Purkayastha, a Brahmin of Dibrugarh, who had devoted his entire life to the service of the Khasis, established a school there, joined hands with the missionaries, the work spread to *Shella, Cherra, Shillong* etc. Details are given below:

Name of village	Year of starting	
	Dispensary	
Shella	—	1924
Cherra	—	1931
		School
Shillong	1952	1933
Dohbarpunji	1940 small homeopath dispensary	1933

This mission is given credit by many sections of the Khasis, for promoting a sense of nationalism among the Khasis and also a secular outlook like treating everyone alike.

The functions of this Mission are on an 'All India' basis. The scriptures are read from the Bible, the Bhagavad Gita, the Zend-Avesta, the Granth-Sahib and other religious books. Many distinguished Khasi leaders, some of the founders of the Ramakrishna Mission. During its long history in the Khasi Hills, it has rendered yeomen services, though of a high quality, are low cost. Its social service especially in the *Cherra*

rs and dearth of adequate finances are the most Khasis speak very highly of this in that they have actually been initiated, i.e. taken into the fold. The strength of devotees runs into a thousand. To conclude, the alien influence affecting the Khasi culture can be divided into two major groups: one embracing Christianity and the other, in essence, Hinduism. The third minor group tries to preserve the religious thought of ancient days, and of course, it is needless to add that the reasons for accepting Christianity have a great effect on a hitherto undisturbed Khasi society. This is an interesting study.

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- This data is compiled from the old Record Book and the Annual Report made by the Rev. S.B. Taylor, Chaplain of the Salesians, 1880- and from the records of the church made

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bringing the information upto the year 1950 and partially from information gathered from a 70 year old informant, Winifred Ghatge. The Church of God, thus called from a phrase in the Bible, simultaneously all over the world---in America, Europe and India. Swami Lokeshwarananda, 'An Unknown young Man's Pioneer in the Hills of Assam,—Prabudh Bharati (Delhi, Calcutta, Oct. p. 419).

5

Impact of the Missionary on Khasi Society

The Khasi Hills felt the gentle breezes of the change with the arrival of the Britishers and missionaries in the early nineteenth century. The first Anglo-Khasi contact followed the annexation of the adjoining Sylhet district by the East India Company in 1765 as a consequence of the grant of Diwani of Bengal. The initial uneasiness about the relations between the native and aliens later took a new turn. As early as 1807, the imposition of the knowledge of the tribals for efficient administration was first realised. The Court of Directors of the East India Company took a formal decision to this effect. In the plains areas of the country, the British rule was more comprehensive and touched more aspects of administration and day-to-day life. In the Khasi Hills, however, from its full annexation in 1833 to its departure in 1947, the British rulers administered the area with a minimum presence and interference respecting the tribal customs leaving the *Syiems* to exercise their authority in local matters as before. The latter existed almost like, but on a far lesser scale and level than the rulers of the princely states in the country.

The Khasi society, strong, close-knit and integrated, was bound to be affected by the presence of an alien ruler, the influence of his culture and the need to adjust to his way

ods. Besides, there were exotic influences from the Christian missionaries. A society matured not only because of the direct factors but also because of the resistance and sometimes opposition encountered by the forces. Thus, inevitably, contact with a foreign religion involved the Khasi individuals; it also affected the Khasi cultural dynamics and integration. The earlier cultural setting changed and after the initial cultural shock, by the time of change was accelerated. At one stage, the process was enculturation. Illustration 12 and its consequences.

A legitimate question can be posed now: would such changes have occurred in Khasi Hills even without the missionaries, by the normal evolutionary process of communications and spread of technology? The answer is and should be an emphatic 'No'. The British rulers were only interested in changes that were imperative to administrative needs. The changes (even economic ones) are not visible in the Khasi country ruled by the British, without a missionary influence. Similar areas in Orissa.

Marginal affects on the society caused by the opening up of communications cannot be denied. Changes consequent on location of the capital at Shillong in Khasi Hills, in 1874, such as the influx of people in large numbers leading to more and more villages, the upsurge in economy and improvement in the aspects of trade, greater horizontal and vertical communication, better communications resulting in the diffusion of new ideas, etc., do owe their origin to the missionaries.

But, the prime factor which induced such mammoth changes in the Khasi society was the missionaries for nearly a century or more. They loosened and unfastened the forces of adaptation and opposition. The changes took place in varying degrees and stages, in the hitherto unchanging society and grew more tangible over a period of time. This is discussed in this chapter. Missionary influence was the catalyst for the metamorphosis in the Khasi society.

Since the maximum exposure of Khasi to Christianity, a study of the missionary impact will be largely of the impact caused by the Christians. The account given below will reveal that the contributions of the missionaries lay mainly in the spheres of religious practices, education, medicine, health, crafts, and skills such as printing, general economic development, and character like developing self-reliance, appearance, cleanliness, hygiene, etc., whereas in spheres such as the family, early political structure, and social influence was minimal. The Christians were the first to arrive and spread their faith; they were the first of conversion. Thus, in the order of things, the impact of Christianity ranks first.

Rev. Tomlin's assessment, after a century of missionary work in 1840, that the Khasi Hills were ripe for missionary work proved to be correct. Upon this assessment alone did the missionaries launch a systematic effort in this direction. Other successful missionaries with ideology of other sects, some of them of the same sects, had only a fringe influence on Khasi Christianity. Today, after nearly 140 years of the beginning of missionary work in a concerted manner in the Khasi Hills, there are 1,00,000 (According to provisional census data given in Chapter IV) Christians in a population of 1,65,000 in the Khasi Hills. The number of Christians alone in 1971 in the district is estimated to be 1,00,000 in a total Khasi population of 3,52,000. Only about 60% of the Khasis are Christians. Orthodox Khasis After the conversion of 1800, seven Khasis embraced Christianity, and the Khasi population became Christian. 47% of the population had become Christian. It was 47% of the population and now about 60% of the population in the district and 60% of the Khasis are Christians. There is a slight discrepancy in the figures given by the church institutions and the census. Matter.²

Why is Christianity strong in the Khasi Hills and Hinduism have made far lesser impact? On

THE MISSIONARY ON KHASI SOCIETY

have married Muslims have embraced Islam, some have adopted Muslim ways or have retained the earlier faith. There has been no blend or via-media. The converted Khasis—either the Brahmsos or those initiated by the Rama Krishna Mission or those who underwent *Uksha* (initiation)—number hardly a thousand. It was that the main factor for the success of Christianity in the Khasi Hills was that the earliest Christian missionaries offered a true solution to their spiritual problems. It is further that by the advent of Christianity, the Khasis, many tribals had forgotten their traditional ways and had lost their main basic directions. As a result, the search for a new light and identity became imperative. Tribal converts were inflamed by their absorption in a new religion. Much of the success of Christianity was due to a small band of devoted workers in the shape of missionaries.

The change in religious affiliations was also due to the indigenous religious practices having been discredited by orthodox Khasis. The elaborate and complex rituals could not be explained satisfactorily. The rituals had been handed down orally. There were many problems of many Khasis who had been attracted to the novelty of another religion attracted to the religion of the rulers implied obvious rewards were two: on this earth, and in the next world. A person into His arms. Admission to schools, hospitals, jobs, help in cash or kind was given to the Khasis by missionaries and Christians. This was a preference over others.

The static conditions of life in the Khasi Hills led to stagnation. Often, people were being cheated and exploited. These factors may be organised under the heading of socio-cultural disintegration: and the following factors are presented below, by some of which the community at that time could be judged:

1. Economic inadequacy.
2. Cultural confusion, meaning essentially loss of identity.

3. High frequency of unhappy homes.
4. Few and weak associations such as visiting organisational memberships.
5. Few patterns of recreation.
6. High frequency of mental instability.
7. High frequency of interpersonal hostility.
8. Weak and fragmented network of commu-

The psychological concomitants of the Khasi time were suspicion, anxiety, depression and a low view of human affairs.

The hardships and persecutions of the early Christians. The tribe ex-communicated them; they lost inheritance: even funeral rites are reported to be in cases of dispute. And yet the faith in the Christian religion remained unshaken.

After the initial culture-shock inevitable in such a transition, Christianity alone of the other new religions, which came in contact, took roots in the soil. It is marked that the Khasis have more readily adopted Christianity and European civilisation than any other tribe in India.⁴ He also observed that in a remote corner of the Khasis, under the guidance of the missionaries, came a nation with its own literature; Khasi and Jaintia dialects of Assam has the privilege of having the vernaculars taught at the Calcutta University. The influence of European ideas also affected the social and political life of the Khasis.

Certain new problems arose initially with conversion. They were settled by different parties in different ways. That in the year 1857, when *Ram Sing Syiem* of both *Syiems* and *Myntris* who had become Christians, was not recognised as state ceremonies had to be performed in the spirit of the old religion.⁵ *Ram Singh* was a son of *Manick*, an orthodox Khasi and *Borsir* who had embraced Christianity, was deprived of the office. The electors felt that the fact that *K. Mil* had embraced Christianity could not deprive him of the *Syiems* office. It was a female *Syiem* to perform state religious ceremonies. An old informant gave an instance of a Christian

phlang who married a non-Christian—Khasi and thereby lost his membership of the church. In the early days, Christians kept away from such social gatherings. In 1939, in a Khasi house, there was a gathering for drinking, whether Catholics could cut with such an orthodox Khasi. Catholic missionaries were not for converts to take part in any religious functions of gentiles or Protestants. On the other hand, orthodox Khasis argued that the Christian humanitarian work as a means to further conversion were against Christians. Nearly 75 per cent of orthodox Khasi farmers insisted that the labourers on his farm must work on Sundays. The British factors compelled Christian labourers to work on Sundays. Orthodox Khasis attached great importance to their religious and social ways; it gave them a sense of identity. Once, in the year 1908, when the cremation of a *Cherra* (*Shra*) took place, the British Government gave a loan from the Government for conducting the ceremony. With the advent of Christianity and western culture, a transformation in social life became inevitable. Converts abandoned their former religious beliefs, accepting Christian teachings and observances, and collaborations, but, they still preserved their inheritance, their household usages and observances, their cultural and political customs. Funeral customs, worship and other animistic celebrations were abandoned in purely Christian areas. In the Western areas, they continued donating to the worship of *Chandi*. Orthodox Khasis still preserve them. However, there are variations in the practice and observances of religious customs. They are more superficially observed than in the pre-Christian times. Megalithic erections (dolmens and menhirs) have been abandoned today by all Christian sects and areas. 6

As contact between the Christian and orthodox Khasis grew, the problem of acculturation grew acute. Intimate and prolonged contact with the Hindus led to a slow and gradual assimilation of Hindu customs. With Muslims, the contact was neg-

onary work rendered the tempo of change for the proper adjustment of tribals. The old Khasi thought began to be shaken. It witnessed the degradation of Khasi societies into castes or outcastes. Whether the results are judged by the amount of money or time spent or by the character involved or service rendered, the missionaries will be considered significant. Orthodox and Hindu Khasis began to change into Christian converts. This reflects that, in part, psychic unity was restored. As a result of a larger influx of outsiders into the Khasi Hills, particularly the upland plateau of Rhynriams due to inter-marriage and communications. Yet, the basic features peculiar to the groups—the *Bhois*, *Wars*, *Lyngams* and *Khasis*—into a different economy and dialect, though the culture of the ancient Khasis too, revolving around the nuclear familiar unit) and Khasi religion remained largely unchanged. The reason for this is the conscious movement for the preservation of the old Khasi culture, which would be discussed later. Even though the hold of the Khasi *Nia* is loosening as Christianity grew in strength, it has withstood the assault on it by modern technologies. In the Mizo Hills (now Mizoram) the population is Christian although missiology began in the Khasi Hills; but, only about 60% of the Khasis are orthodox. The hold of the Khasi religion is an eloquent testimony to its basic strength. A crucial question arises: while numerical conversion, is conversion to be judged by mere change in the personality attitudes? As remarked once that hearts and not the head are the seat of religion. Success of Christianity in the Khasi Hills is that the converts maintain many an old tradition. The existence of a pro-Khasi cultural movement amidst the influx of different religions and civilisations in the hills is a clear indication that ideas crept into general social life. A new

POPULATION TRENDS

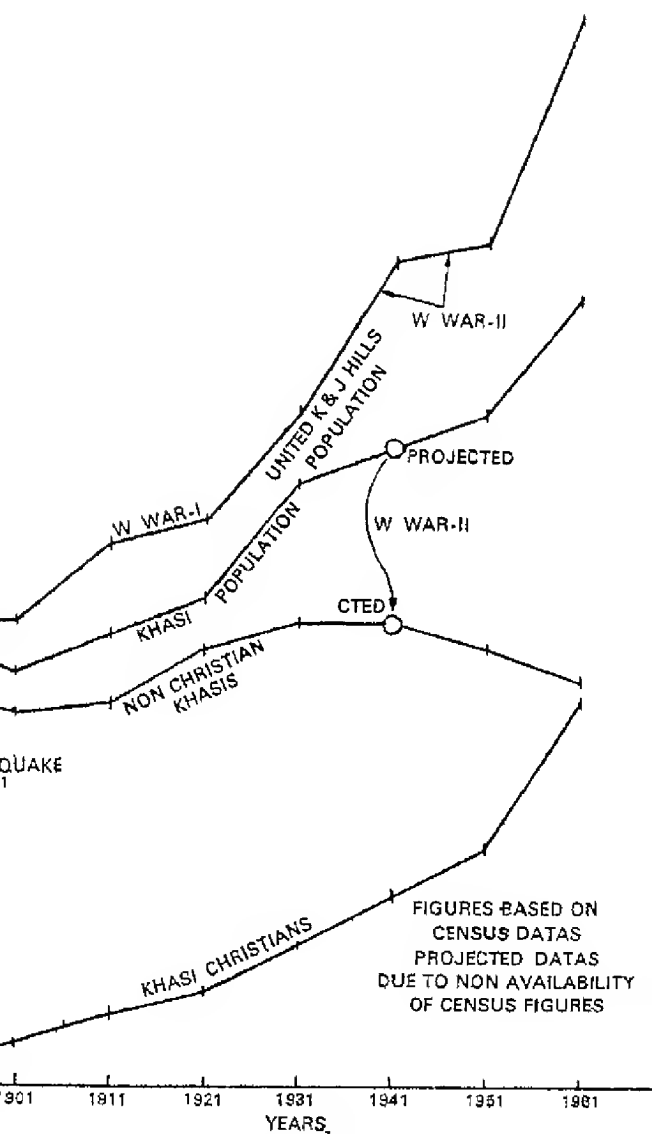


ILLUSTRATION 1

THE KHASIS

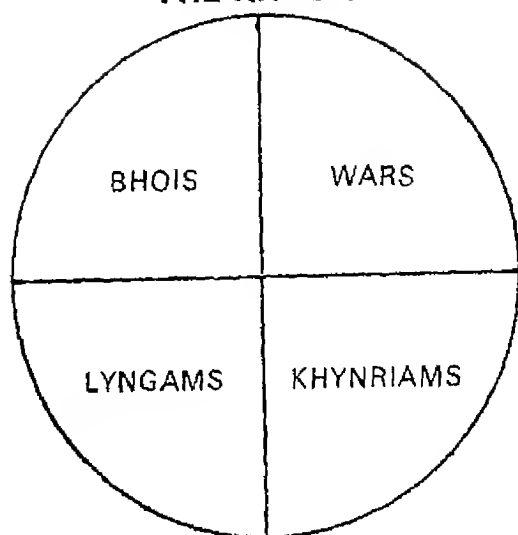


ILLUSTRATION 2

SOCIAL HIERARCHY AMONG THE EARLY KHASIS

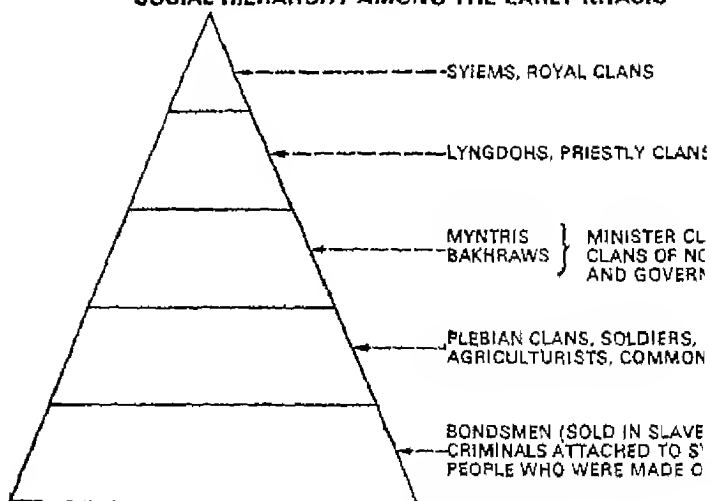
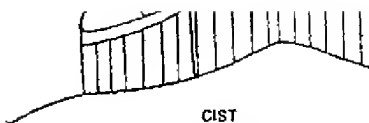


ILLUSTRATION 3

C



CIST

ILLUSTRATION 4

MONUMENTAL GROUPS

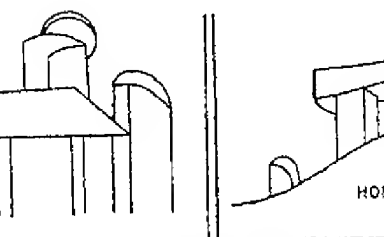


ILLUSTRATION 5

MONUMENTAL STONES

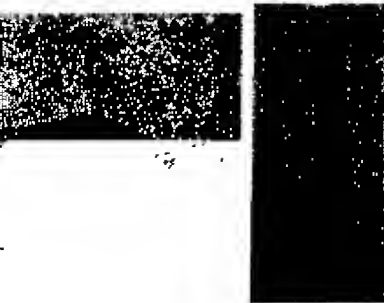


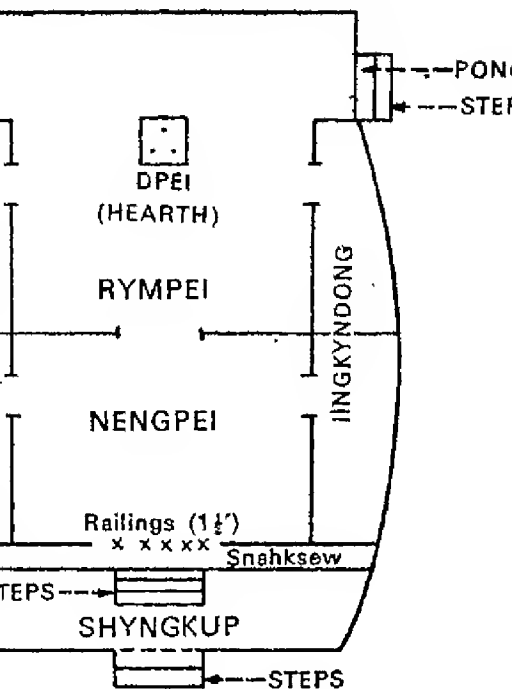
ILLUSTRATION 6

NONGKREM DA



ILLUSTRATION

PLAN OF A KHASI HOUSE



'IINGKYNDONG' are sleeping rooms
 raised above the main floor.
 side walls are turtle-shaped
 roofs are boat-shaped

ILLUSTRATION 8

RURAL KHASI HOUSE

POLITICAL SET-UP OF THE EARLY KHASIS

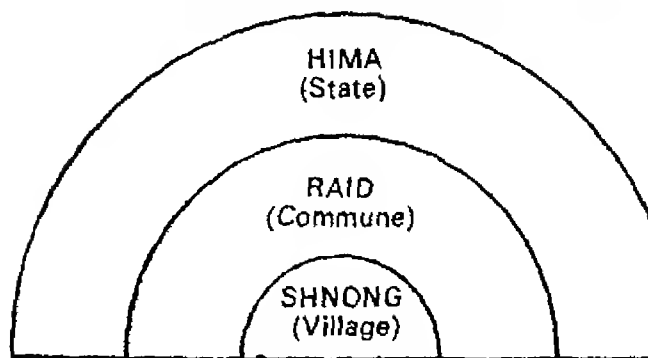


ILLUSTRATION 10

MAIN CONCEPTS IN KHASI RELIGION

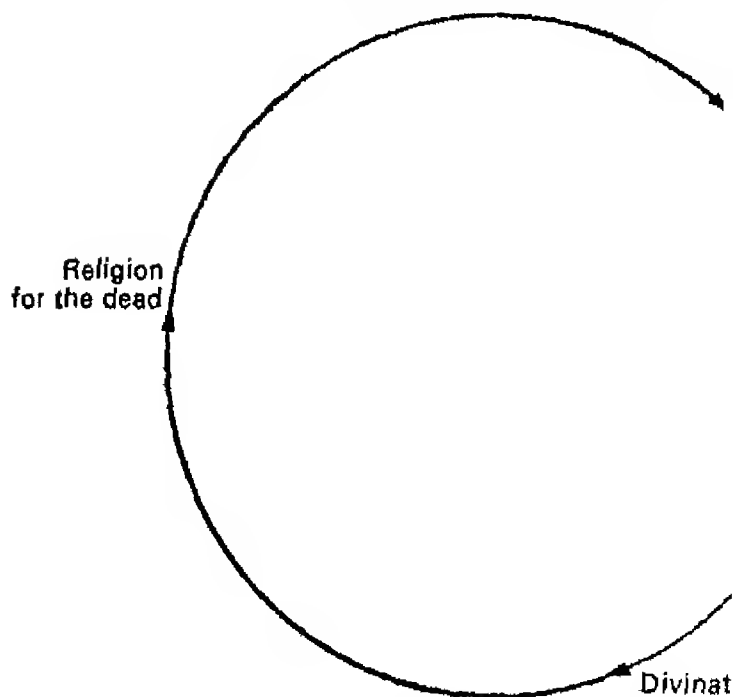


ILLUSTRATION 11

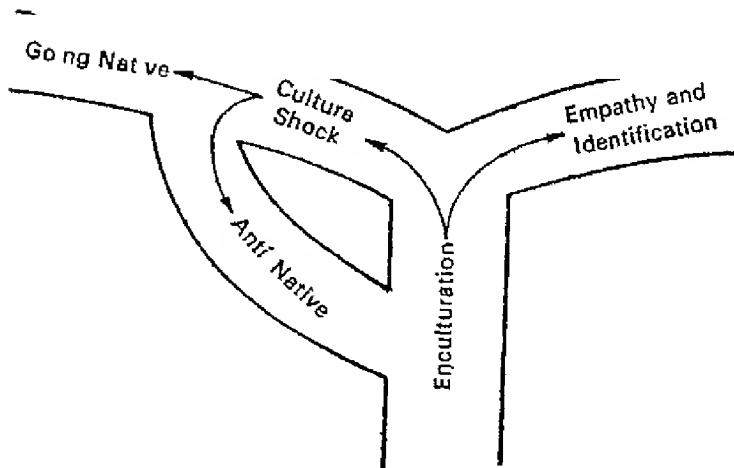


ILLUSTRATION 12

DIAGRAM SHOWING
CULTURAL INFLUENCES ON KHASI SOCIETY

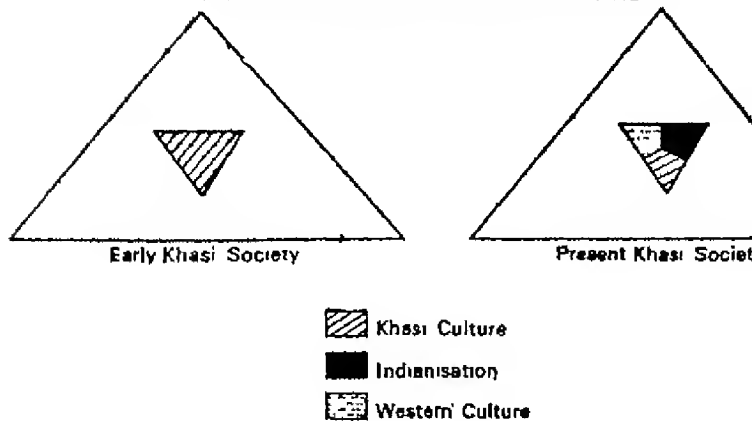
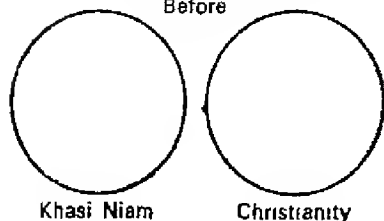


ILLUSTRATION 13

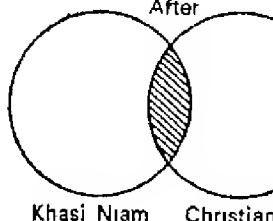
IMPACT OF ALIEN RELIGIONS ON KHASI NIAM RELIGION

I. Christianity and Khasi Niam :

Before

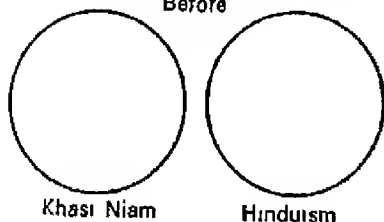


After

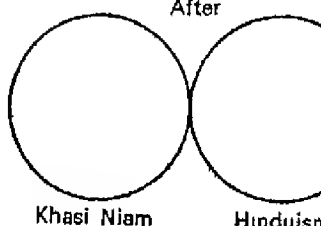


II. Hinduism and Khasi Niam :

Before

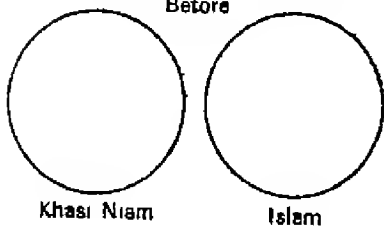


After



III. Islam and Khasi Niam :

Before



After

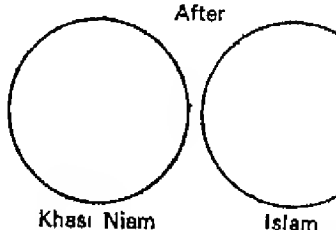


ILLUSTRATION 14

CT OF THE MISSIONARY ON KHASI SOCIETY

merged, in the sense of a fairly advanced c
l of the old and the new.

al Hierarchy

The earlier social hierarchical pattern with the top of the pyramid, followed by priestly clan nobleman, soldiers, agriculturists and coolsmen at the base, was disturbed. The classe sold in slavery and criminals made to work (class), became extinct. Prisoners were no slavery of previous days became extinct. But avery, occasioned by acute poverty, were still backward pockets of the *Bhoi* area. Christ egalitarian society, and Christian teachings e for emergence of a new melange in the Khas order had no room for the priestly clans. T dominating the market led to the consequ t of social order on the basis of wealth. in the social pyramid increasingly cut ac nctions. Further, since the earlier respecti e not followed strictly by clans, the new socia e was more of a sub-cultural than cultural n

ations with the Plainsmen

Mutual curiosity marked the first contact ple of the plains and the hills along with d , fear and fights. The transition from a bart sh economy changed the basis for social rela nomy brought with it a kind of modernity, ir hythm of greater independence and faster viving social systems. Stresses, strains and owed. Many Khasis lacked the will to grow ere the will was there, there was not sufficien nomy or enough dynamism and flexibility is, the progress was slow. Regional imbalai nevetable disparity grew developing a hian nsmen and the Khasis. Frequent and ween the two has not dispelled these 'not toc ich were historical and ethnical in origin, t n aggravated and tuated by the appeara

sionaries. The Khasis turned to them with
sidered themselves superior to the rest.

nily

The earlier large familial institutions (*kpo*
be modified and a certain ambiguity arc
her socio-religious customs viz. family cr
emonies, ancestor-worship and memorial
down, and ties of kinship loosened. Nor
uming a new importance. While basically,
ained a living and active institution, the *ing*
size owing to families migrating on a scale la
ule earlier it spanned six generations on
esent generation depth is only three gener
es, two. Another new trend was to switch o
ch existed in a mild form in the *War* area.

While the basic role of women still cor
ther role of *kinder, kuche* and *kirche*, owing
g economic independence, and the introducti
ristian idea of patriarchal societies, two
ticeable. The Christian women who, more
x counterparts, supplemented their income
means of small trade such as stitching,
aving or by working as daily labourers, had
gnity or self-respect about them than th
omen. They began to nurture new ideas a
ild-care and about house-keeping too. An e
auty, a keen sense of aesthetics was develop
riterion of sheer utility to which the women cl
ys.

The other trend was, increasingly, fo
oungest daughters and heiresses), more so
ban areas, to surrender their rights to inher
they wanted to be free of their social and
ons. Even as early as 1900, under the influenc
few orthodox heiresses did not stay in th
required by ancient Khasi custom. The
nces with their husbands. Although society
ntred the woman did not act under as
before from her maternal uncle and e der b

EFFECT OF THE MISSIONARY ON KHASI SOCIETY

With new occupations growing like mushrooms, there was a corresponding increase in the number of educated women. This brought about a new kind of personal independence for women too. But they had no rights to participate in acts of legislation and judiciary. Neither could they attend the *durbar* (court), nor could they elect the members of the council, yet, women still occupied an important position in the community. They now had more freedom of movement. Women from aristocratic and cultured families were free from their own restrictions. A Khasi informant from a cultured family mentioned how, though educated, his own mother never left the premises of the family without being accompanied by a male—either a relative or close friend. His great grandmother had introduced this practice and he took it with dignity about it. Despite the new opportunities, women had no intense desire to pursue a vocation. The reverence of female progenitors diminished, but it remained a feature of the later family organisation. The head of a woman's clan, as before, adopted her children. The influence of the missionaries prevailed but, as indicated earlier, it was not a radical change in the position of women. Women dominated the domestic life of male relatives of the *Kur*. They either managed the household or with the help of the husband. Legally and socially, despite a slight modification, the traditional pattern consequent upon the spread of Christianity. Women enjoyed a high status. A case has been recorded by a native officer, who was at Nongkrem in 1905. He found that while he was there, one of his subjects imposed a fine of Rs 300 on one of his subjects for disrespectfully of one of his female relatives. The missionaries ordained women to be loyal to their domestic duties and busy in the task of furthering family ties. The impact of missionary influence was that, where, women now enjoyed far more latitude in their movement and were quite free in their movement and participation in political and social affairs. In continuation of this, they assumed control of important family matters and showed themselves thrifty in the management of the household. Men have lagged behind in this respect. The Khasi and Jaintia are socially and economically backward *Bhoi* and

technically, descent is through the mother but meaningless due to extreme poverty. My own Christian families influenced by western ideas acquired a new sense of assertion; to this extent a change in the earlier status of women, which now came in line with that of men. Men disapproved in the interference of the wife's male and other relatives concerning the children and the family. This was the case of urban families, Christian ones influenced by Hinduism. But in the case of majority rural families, earlier ideas and pattern of family life were still there. There were some minor variations but these were not significant. Educated women were now interested in things besides the home. They were also interested in politics. It was generally felt that it was in the fitness of things that women were politically more active; interest in politics of women led on to a chain of wider interests in social, legal and even religious.

It has been stressed that in early days, the structure of the early Khasi society was in a sense based on the significant roles of the eldest maternal uncle and his wife. Now, the importance shifted from the mother to the father. Children came closer to the latter than to the former. The earlier family ties loosened. The clan was no longer as cohesive a bond as before. Traditional practices and beliefs have died down. Economic circumstances, widening disparities, changing times, but because of a change in the social structure with the dying down of the practices of the past. The clan stone (*mawbah*), and erecting the clan stone, the erstwhile delicate but strong tie of *Apot* which was of a domestic in nature has also been broken. As a result, at a time in Khasi social history, the problem of illegitimate children in families where children were not close to their own families as before. Child marriage became a problem too. There was a confusion of authority of the clan was felt in every matter, leading to a decline.

Marriage

Earlier, courtship had been the traditional pattern of marriage, although arranged marriages prevailed among the aristocratic families. Their free sexual play but, chastity was valued. The traditional pattern of courtship became a more formal arrangement. While the basic modes remained the same, the elaborate practices associated with marriage ceremonies became less elaborate. These declined considerably. The number of marriages increased. Divinations were not common. Prayers were offered to *U Blei*; the mixing of the liquor (*Kiad*) out of the jars brought by the bride and the groom was the usual basis of marriage as an institution. Desertion and divorces were common among the orthodox Khasis. One in ten among the Christians, divorces, extra-marital sexual relations had increased although the number of adulteries had gone down among the Christians. My observation among all sects marriage had been stabilised. All the earlier rules of abstinence in marriage were strictly observed. During the later years, the situation changed. The new political importance of the Khasis led to better developed communication and a boost to the economy; the missionaries could not do the latter. The influx of outsiders into the Khasi hills led to increase in the number of marriages and marriages with non-Khasis.

Marriages between Khasis and non-Khasis were common among the Lushais and among non-tribals, between Khasis, Bengalis and Nepalis. Exogamy and endogamy in the Khasi society followed the same pattern. In the case of Khasis married to Muslim women, the Khasis had embraced Islam.

The exogamous unit, *Kur* or *Jaid* (clan), which descended through females, has remained the same for centuries. The missionaries could not dislodge this matri-centred social institution.

er, the clan is strictly exogamous, as b
 of *Umsohsun* told me how in the early
 y, the Catholic missionaries tried to in
 ce, which, according to the Khasis wa
 d. Violation of it amounted to the comm
 e early years of their work in the Khasi Hi
 German Fathers) who preached the Catho
 orted some inter and intra-*Kur* marriag
Mawphlang, *Laitkynsew* and *Laitkor*. Ever
 ed to this. When such marriages took p
 positive encouragement of the missionari
 places was affected. Not only was fu
 ed but all the Christians went back to
 religion again. The work of the mission
 te setback; never again did any missionary
 ce.

There were changes in certain wedding ritu
 Society became more relaxed; for instan
 males of the female's *kur* could now atte
 er, the groom stayed on with the bride
 of two or three children and then moved
 e of his own. Over the years this stay be
 aid that only in the interior, there are oc
 ple staying on in the bride's house till the
 . Otherwise, in most cases, the couple
 h or so, and in urban areas, after a few da
 Although marriage remained a sacramenta
 of abstinence were observed strictly, s
 s relating to marriage died down gradu
 e nineteenth century. Most informant
 ger generation of the early twentieth
 ve in them while those who were still you
 about them. The custom of offering b
 d which the entire Khasi culture revolved,
 thodox Khasis and by a large majority
 ified themselves with the Khasi society. M
 and ordinances that permitted and recog
 dows, widowers and divorcees were stil
 g the Catholics. Procreation was consider

marriage. In the earlier Khasi society, methods were not known; strength lay in numbers and that men should multiply. Children were blessings of God. As the setting changed on land in certain areas; flourishing and increasing wealth anew and its display; the clan picked it up and there was a glaring economic disparity and awareness of it. The increasing responsibility of a child (better clothing, education) and there was a new awareness of the child's value to outsiders. On the one hand, the demand for more children and on the other, the bareness of children was experienced. And yet, family planning was not acceptable—more so in rural areas than in the majority of urbanites. The strong feeling against family planning was adequately by the following couplet.

Man la u briew ba la kha

I wan rah la u soh khaw.

Every person who is born has his share of God (God provides for every one).

Khasis who opposed family planning quoted this proverb in support of their point of view.

In the later years, as before, no stigma was attached to barrenness, except in the *War* area, where belief in barrenness prevailing in the area was attributed to, so that the cause of barrenness could well be the sin of the family (*daw*—fallen on the woman. As before, this did not prevent a divorce should a man so desire. Concubinage was accepted by early Khasis as a part of human nature. Christians accepted it as a sin although according to the Church, it was a sin. My enquiries in the field revealed that in the early years, marriages of Christians had initial difficulties which included social and religious principles. An instance may be given of a orthodox *Khadduh* (as such an heiress) who

EFFECT OF THE MISSIONARY ON KHASI SOCIETY

What can explain more change in the dress of women? Some informants mentioned that in the Khasi social system, women were expected to wear traditional dress in order to retain this position, they wore traditional dress in the typical Khasi way although traditional dress was expensive and cumbersome. Other informants mentioned that the more convenient and inexpensive dress was adopted. Women in the *Bhoi* and *Lyngnam* areas were mostly engaged in field work, tended domestic animals, performed household chores and were extremely poor, dressed in traditional dress in a functional manner and voiced almost no opinion about the traditional dress. The general feeling was that the change in dress was not a gift of the early Christians. From early days women wore similar traditional dresses.

The Christian missionaries explained the importance of a healthy and balanced diet. They used entirely for the purposes of dividing labour. Milk came to be eaten on a larger scale. The missionaries were also responsible for the breaking of the traditional taboo regarding milk as a food item among the traditional Khasis and the progressive non-Christians also explained the importance of milk as a food. Yet, in many places, more so in the traditional areas, people did not take milk as a beverage or with tea. It was not available, or it was too expensive or it was considered that it was an animal secretion or an impure food. The staple food of the Khasis remained the traditional rice. The daily meal of the average person consisted of rice, chillies and a dry tuberos root. Manual workers and labourers and porters carrying heavy loads on their backs ate three meals as breakfast, lunch and evening one in the noon and one in the evening. Non-manual labourers took two meals daily with a drink in between except water. About 40% of the informants belonging to the age-group 40-70 years said that they did not take tea. They ate sumptuous meals and only traditional rice-cakes. Rice-cakes prepared in two or three

ngles, berries and wild roots and common
um and marrow (also known as squa
es and sweet potatoes; bananas, were
sh, boiled beef, pork and chicken were
David Scott introduced the potato to
a missionary qualified in agriculture
y years ago, for introducing many new
s who stayed in *Shillong* and the nearby
ned the importance of tending vegetable
re, etc. Cauliflower, cabbage, a variety of
ls, capsicums and fruits such as pineap
es were new to the Khasis. Now the
ar. Yet, even in interior villages, w
nce or advice of Government had not
it, a 90-year-old informant said that wor
ended vegetables prayed to *U Blei* (God)
after the crops. During a visit to the villa
e *War* area, I met a widow who had been
d to the small patch of kitchen vegetable
she was better, she came out and sp
ot think that I have forgotten you, or neg
vell. Do not have any ill feeling.' Wh
ered, she found that the crop of vegetable
old me how she was grateful to *U Blei*
s, and the consequent neglect of the vega
ll as any crop that was well-tended.
y the early years of the twentieth century
ular drink. Most urbanites took tea with
he consumption, on the average, was six
In the villages situated on the main roa
, while many Khasis took tea with sugar
number did not take either milk or sugar
ste', I was told. In the interior, tea was
adding sugar by most families except a f
progressive. Coffee was taken by very
es living in and around *Shillong*; so were
and squashes. The latter are too ex
is.

Meals were normally eaten with fing
tians, especially those living in urban areas

utlery and crockery. Spoons made of meta

In addition to earthen vessels and ba
ainers used earlier to store water and grain
inium, copper and brass were used. Glas
s (the latter more so) were used for drink
of spoons, and vessels could have arise
ating the missionaries.

Taboos regarding food and other items s
f milk were also not observed very stric
ve members of the *Nongtariang jaid* (clan)
ge which was earlier considered a taboo fo
nched inhibitions against particular item
down change and by loosening taboos i
i society was made more dynamic by the n
nter-ethnic marriages brought some cha
F beef and pork was not prohibited in Kha
tarily, those who were married to Hindu
come under their influence, gave thes
nced by Hinduism, whether by the Bra
akrishna Mission also acted likewise.

ulants

Drinking still forms very much a part of
i despite the fact that Christianity, K
uism preach temperance. Indeed man
are habitual drinkers. Jones, the P
ry taught the distillation of liquor to the
rice-beer or a spirit distilled from rice or r
drink was of two kinds: (1) *Ka Kiad Hia*
Bamboo liquor (*suid kiad* was also drunk
made out of potatoes. Most of the hous
ed the drink at home; for, drinks formed a
cial and religious ceremonies. With t
onaries, sophisticated drinks common
introduced to the affluent Khasis, the
Christians. The Christian missionaries
drink to some of their visitors during
ugh the church forbade drinking.

Tobacco was earlier either chewed or sn
n resembled the *hookah* of the north Ind

ruralites, the practice continued. By the 1930s, *biris* (rolled leaves into which tobacco was pressed) had become the dominant form of smoking, and a quarter of a century later, cigarette smoking was also common. Among the rich Khasis, cigars were considered the style. Indigenously made bamboo cigarettes were also common.

An attempt was made by the British to curb the use of opium into the malarious *Bhoi* country. This practice has all but vanished now. The goods previously provided by opium are now available from other sources.

Religion

The Christian missionaries preached 'scientific' beliefs which they disbelieved and caused a considerable decline in belief in clan totems among Christian Khasis. This decline, in turn, led to a change regarding the eating of the clan totem. Previously, among educated members and the Christian community, the eating of the clan totem was strictly forbidden. For instance, the members of the *Thak* clan were strictly forbidden the eating of crabs, no matter how delicious. Beliefs that certain objects as, for example, crabs, or animals, also died down among the Christians.

Medicine

Dawai kynbat, local herbal medicines, were still used by the Khasis. The Western missionaries provided modern medicines and the Hindu missionaries provided traditional medicines. The Western missionaries also introduced vaccination and inoculation as a measure against disease. In the early stages, the Khasis kept their traditional measures; as informants insisted, chickens were looked upon as favours from the Christian God. A foreign missionary became a symbol of prestige soon became a matter of conviction. As the Khasis saw that the general health improved and that Christians were being cured of their diseases, they also began taking new medicines.

were more expensive and were within the reach. Among some Khasis, the belief given by medicines were more effective. By the end of the twentieth century, 70% of the urban population and rural population were taking allopathic medicine. The first consultation was given by a *Kaviraj* (practitioner) whose father was a compounder working as a doctor.

As a result of the excellent pioneer work done by the missionaries, ignorance and fear about surgery was overcome. A 30-year-old Christian woman from *Cherra* said that she was in trouble. After two years of marriage, her husband was not able to have children. She took her to the Hospital of the Welsh Mission. When the surgeon advised surgery, she consulted her old grandmother too supported the doctor's advice. She had heard that doctors are the men who know and do good. Of course, a lot of perseverance and patience was required from the doctors. A 60-year-old Presbyterian from Wales narrated an incident about 25 years ago. A 40-year-old man was suffering from a deadly disease and severe abdominal pain. He was in bed and seeing his condition the villagers kept away from him. Finally, the man himself went to stay near the hospital. He isolated himself from the entire village. I visited him every day; at times he took it and at times he refused. He was upset and his temper grew as his condition became more miserable. He became an outcaste and would not talk to anyone and became cranky. The doctor continued to visit him through his wife, asking if I could visit him. He told his wife that he would jump off the cliff from the hospital. Again, I sent word to the desperate man asking him to come for him, and the man sent word that he was ready to come. Gradually, medicines were sent to him but these were thrown away in anger. After some time, I gave him a change and the man started taking the medicines with relief and as the man felt better, he started taking medicines regularly. After a few days, he came to the hospital and enquired as to who had sent him the medicines. I told him if I could meet him. When I met him

ment recommended further, for he came
 is Saviour. He accompanied me to *Shi*
 tor, I have placed my life in your hands.
 e.' He was operated upon and very gradu
 returned to the village. Then onwards
 e there were about six Christian houses
 gnorance about surgery was removed." A
 from the village *Wahkdait* said how
 ng (foreign) doctor had come and
 nts having cold and cough, he gave t
 y medicine. 'The tablet was small, white
 on telling each visitor. Gradually, when
 old, cough or headache they would volun
 r and ask for the white magical tablet.
 nant whose maternal grandfather ga
 cines, said that the Khasis of his village
 believed in the efficacy of these medicines
 onary, inspired by the Vedanta phil
 ge of universal religion of Swami Vi
 otic zeal burning in him, came to the villag
 t miles away from *Cherrapunjee*) upon
 local Khasis who wanted to learn Benga
 hat the Christian missionaries there were
 re of the Hindu religion to the Khasis.
 a practitioner of homeopathy. Single-hand
 l and opened a dispensary there. His info
 i *Kynbat* (Khasi herbal medicine) was n
 ffective by some Khasis as allopathy or ho
 the latter to be cheaper; further, th
 y available. But many Khasis had fai
 ine too, as it was cheap, effective in ce
 gave a sense of identity, as it had been
 ncestors. With the increasing influence o
 opathic schools of medicine, the earlier
 inal practice and religion ceased to be a
 umber of Khasis who believed that sic
 gry evil spirits and through the agency
 ds declined, but this belief was still
 tians too, in times of crisis, are re
 ached *Nongknias* for worship to appease

OF THE MISSIONARY ON KHASIS

one-setting too, this medicine was considered by many Khasis.

It has been emphasised earlier that natural *bab* and *sohphirah* were used by the Khasis. Ground charcoal and the skin of the *bab* were used for the cleaning of the teeth. These were not regular. Rinsing of the mouth after was the body cleansed, the hair combed, and the nails trimmed regularly. The missionaries, through their preaching, cleanliness of person and surroundings, boiling drinking water, regular bathing and washing, and fresh clothes. Earlier, the higher-ups were particular about the cleaning and general appearance. The missionaries, patiently and persistently, taught better grooming and hygienic habits. Thus, the people became aware of the importance of cleanliness. The contribution of the Christian missionaries was in the grooming of the people through hygiene. Soap, toothbrushes came to be used increasingly in use. Combs of wooden, bamboo and bone combs also came to be brought from the markets of the plains.

Change to Child-Birth

There was change in the attitude to child-birth. In the days, old and experienced women from the plains attended delivery cases. This was the case in the interior, for, few rural families could afford to pay. There were dispensaries and hospitals in the plains. The affluent rural families did avail of the services. In the interior, there were a number of hospitals. Working women of labourers went there for delivery. They stayed normally for three or four days. The placenta was not preserved for the naming ceremony.

Conception and Pregnancy

In later years, although biological facts of pregnancy were known to the Khasis, they still believed that the will of God was supreme. Most of the earlier pregnancies were observed by all sects of Khasis.

n, for life was held sacred. Missionary
any marked impact as those earlier beliefs

008

Many early taboos died down, for the
s preached against them and the prog
dox Khasis came under their influence. For
s a taboo (*sang*) to build a house with stor
sides, to use iron or nails in building a h
one timber in building the hearth and a
d earlier. In the early years of the n
the house of a prominent Khasi was bu
he first square-shaped house built in the
earlier taboos were not observed, local lab
it and labour had to be hired from Sylhe
cutting of trees from sacred forests (*Lav
doh*) and many other taboos were also no
onaries spoke strongly against the observi
asons. It meant denying certain things o
ment; and, it also meant identification wit
re. The taboos were observed less strict
ers; for instance, the taboo regarding the
after the death of a spouse placed on a wi
marriage near vanished in urban areas
riages were few in number. But some othe
d on the Khasi rural mind e g, not killing
without first throwing rice in the direction
g with any one, except with one's fello
rashing of paddy was going on. Normally
hunting, they did not observe the taboo s

Witchcraft and Sorcery

Witchcraft and sorcery were tinged with
before. In decent company, this topic was
1. The belief in witchcraft and sorcery of
dox, urban and Christian Khasis died do
also vanished considerably among many
ted classes. But, among certain sectio
belief was so deep-rooted that whenever a
believed it to be due to the sacrifices th

2. In the beginning of the twentieth century, cases when murders were reported to have occurred in the rural as well as near the urban areas, the victims were sacrificed to Gods.⁸ Among some families, the practice continued to a certain extent. And, among Christians, too. Some people, both orthodox and Christians, held the belief partially, 'to partially appease the wrath of the Gods, they gave bits of cloth, or strands of hairs, or offerings of food, and offered these, so that the wrath of the *Thangmen* would be averted from them. The fear of the 'serpent monster' was still prevalent among the Khasis.

Khasi

The presence and activities of the missionaries in the Khasi hills opened the strong revivalist forces within the Khasi society. The orthodox forces in Khasi society consolidated their position, opposing the spread of and conversion to Christianity. It was thus that the *Seng Khasi* movement came into being.

The *Seng Khasi* was founded by some educated Khasis with the object of preservation of Khasi culture and religion. The original idea was to form a Khasi men's association and Khasis of all religions to join it. But the Christians were militant and the movement became a body of orthodox Khasis. The leaders associated with the movement are Jeebon Nath, J. Chandranath Roy, and Kupardan; a non-Christian, Charan Das, was also an important member. The main objects of preserving Khasi culture were discussed and the guiding principles of the *Seng Khasi* were formulated.

1. The Association or assembly would consist of all Khasis who adhere to the tenets of kinship and the traditions of Khasi ancestors.
2. Members' belief should be that man is not born into the world to earn righteousness through good deeds; man is born to seek love and propagate it.
3. Members should respect their fellow-men and have a sense of humanity and divinity.
4. God, the sovereign Lord is to be acknowledged as the Almighty Creator, the Giver of all.

at present too, the Christians barring the Christian Khasi dances, keep away from this cultural movement. Liberal Christians do help in or witness the dances. Earlier, the Christians, upon conversion, discarded their dance costumes and jewellery, thus distancing themselves from the early dances. Though strongly and highly anti-Christian in nature, the work of the movement has continued over the years. The body runs a social welfare centre is run in *Sohryng Khami*; a dance festival is published annually. Other activities include the annual dance festival, *Shad suk Mynsiem*. Some of the dances are *Langkyrdem*, *Mawsynram* and *Mawlyat*. The annual dance festival, *Shad Suk Mynsiem*, is held in the Khasi Hills since ages have been a part of the culture. The periodic dancing was called *phur*. The dances in vogue today are the *Shad Suk Mynsiem* and the *Krem* dance. The former lasts for two or three days and is a dance for happiness and peace of mind. The latter is a dance and a festivity one. As before, the people take part in it; costumes are as gorgeous as before. The present general feeling is that Christianity is an inroad in the earlier Khasi culture and tradition. The *Seng Khasi* is helping the revival of the Khasi culture, thereby preventing the absorption of the Khasi culture entirely. A Christian informant said that the movement is greatly felt; for the revival of Khasi dancing, the movement brings all the Khasis closer. He said that in some times, such activities could be performed. The movement of remembrance of earlier ceremonies or rites in the Khasi culture. This movement began basically as a reaction to the influence of Christianity, anticipating the danger to the Khasi culture. Later on, owing to the influence of the orthodox Khasis, some of them convinced of the value of the fruits of Christian teaching, there was a reaction against the attitude of preserving all aspects of Khasi culture. Thus, many ceremonies and rituals are being performed more sentimental than rational; an attempt was made to reach the Khasi minds, so that they would accept the movement, however, is handicapped greatly by the lack of workers and finance on the one hand, and

s of Christians to spread Christianity. One factor is the increasing acceptance of western culture, a phenomenon that is nationwide. A parallel may be drawn in other resurgent and revivalist movements of similar nature in the country, most of which are in opposition to Christian teachings and the Christian religious beliefs and the Hindu religion.

Education

Second only to conversion, and in fact a close companion, ranks as the most important contribution of Christian missionaries in the Khasi Hills. The primary object of imparting education was to further the process has resulted in opening to the Khasis, all the wide horizons of knowledge through education.

As per oral traditions, the Khasis had a script in the floods. Later, some Khasi village scribes called *masoi*, who could read and write on plantain or fan-palm leaves. The British missionaries to come to the Khasi Hills, attempted to translate the New Testament into Khasi by the use of this script. The translation was considered so imperfectly intelligible to the natives.⁹ Perhaps the Bengali orthography with its more complex system on the one hand unsuitable to the Khasi language, the Bengali translators proved inadequate to convey the meaning over spoken Khasi. Thus the attempt was unsuccessful. It was for this reason that the missionaries planned to abandon the use of Bengali script. Only in 1841, with the advent of the Welsh missionaries, a script for the Khasi language was introduced, the use of the Roman alphabet, which fitted in a neat, uniform, and legible order. In adopting the Roman alphabet, phonetic adjustments were made to suit the Khasi language. The *Cherra* dialect became the standard language for the purpose of script.

With the birth of a script to the Khasi language, the education of the Khasis was laid. The process of the Khasis was thus a direct contribution of

Thomas Jones, who walked up to Cherrapunji, is considered to be the father of Khasi education. He brought a script to the language and with it began the process of formal education. This was the policy and thus his Mission's goals in the region. He frequently explained in a letter sent by him in 1800: 'The only plan which appears to me the best purpose is to establish schools in the hills, to teach the Khasis—children and adults—the principles of religion; and to instruct them in the principles of agriculture; or, in other words, to give them some of the knowledge which is given in our Sunday schools at home. We will induce any other feature, except what may be necessary to bring the children to the schools, or to train them to make use of the natives to teach their fellow-tribesmen. In this way we shall not only bring them into the knowledge of gospel doctrines but we shall enable them to read and when we shall have translated the Holy Scriptures into their language we shall be able, at least, in every family able to read the Scriptures to be able to understand them also—and I view this as an important step towards their evangelization. Through education, and through education we shall lay the foundations by which we shall be able to establish schools in the Khasi Hills and prepared to receive the 'First Khasi Reader' (*Ka kha*). The second, a translation, called 'Mother's Gift'. The many initial problems confronting the field of education were met and overcome by faith and perseverance. Opposition arose and it became evident that the missionaries were greatly influencing the students and eroded their traditional beliefs. In some instances, the boys refused to attend school. Five boys attending the school at Cherrapunji were threatened with a dreaded operation in view of the belief that the 'thirsty Thlen' secures the knot of a man's life. His family are doomed to a horrible death if they do not frequently resort to egg-breaking to break the knots. The demons were in favour of the children attending school. As a result, schools were frequently

her or the attendance was irregular.¹¹ With the opening of Chapter IV the initial opposition attending the efforts of Lewis in trying to educate the Khasi women was somewhat softened at *Cherrapunjee*. There were certainly some elements of opposition which provided a lighter relief to the missionaries. A group of orthodox Khasis appear to have been opposed to the earlier script was lost owing to the will of the missionaries. His wish that Khasis remain without a script was persisted when there were positive clashes between the old and new values.

With the opening of schools in the interior of the hills for a formal training in academic and vocational subjects, teachers from among the local population began to impart education in more and more schools. Technical training centres were also opened. The printing press also established, making Christian publications more independent, the local missions more independent, the translations were printed and shipped from the Khasi Hills. The efforts of various educational institutions have also been mentioned in Chapter IV. Until the advent of Independence in the twentieth century, the missions prepared their own text-books also, later conforming to the standards prescribed by the government.

As mentioned earlier, the government encouraged the missionary efforts by means of grants. The missionaries recommended educated Khasis for jobs and other social gains from education. An incident is mentioned in Chapter IV of the manner in which an Inspector of Schools recommended grants to a school on the condition that it not imparting Christian religious teachings. This was reported to Mahatma Gandhi who wrote in 1920 against such coercive practices of the missionaries and Christianity. However, the missionary efforts have been successful owing to its high standard. It reformed the people in discipline, self-reliance (as against the earlier dependence) and cleanliness. Education also produced a new personality and leadership in every sphere of social, economic, political and professional.

Following the Welsh Presbyterian mission

mission that started work in the Khasi hills. Thus, the Catholics, the Ramoos and others began to spread education and thus broke the economic and social barriers of literacy and medical help accompanied by understanding. The Welsh Presbyterians, being the pioneers in the field, the quantity and the quality of education was of a high standard and the intelligentsia and elite thus began to emerge. With the passing of time and shifting of the Government to Shillong, which grew in importance in the valley of Assam, the missionaries also carried on their work, and established a network of institutions. The Presbyterians had the maximum number of institutions supported by the government.

The initial impact of the missionary work, the availability of employment opportunities, medical facilities, education etc., led in a way, to an acceptance of the orthodox Khasis. While retaining their earlier culture, they were quick to realise the benefits of education imparted by the missionaries. In a journal¹² there was a lot of controversy about the work of the missionaries; so in *Sohra*, U M. D. started a small school in his compound. Many young males such as the father-in-law of Ka T. and U Sorki Dolor went to study Bengali in Sylhet. Others after them were the father of U Raimuni, the father of U Joy. The father of U Kishun, the father of U Ph. went to go to study Bengali in Sylhet. They felt that they would benefit from the Welsh who, instead, of spreading Christianity through education in Khasi and in the valley, since there was no satisfactory and complete education in the Welsh Schools, the respective fathers of U. D. D. and of Delising and others went to study Bengali. They followed U Sib Charan Roy, U Babu Singh. Many others also followed and went to study Bengali. Babu Jeebon Roy later started a school (1877-78), which has now become a Government School and as a consequence there are

double graduates in the Khasi Hills. An English school was also started by the people themselves. While the imposition of an alien religion brought through the medium of education evoked the orthodox Khasis, there was also the quick recognition of the benefits of such education. Thus there could not be against the missionaries who had done so much. A sense of inferiority complex also grew among certain Khasis of the superior civilisation of the western world. There was an urge and longing to be associated with education and look dignified and cultured. The orthodox Khasis felt left out both by the English and by the Christian Khasis and to reach out to Sylhet and other places for education. Their efforts in this direction did not bear much fruit. There was the case of Homiwell who in 1896, went to Calcutta for higher education. The Hindus refused to let him be a student and the Christians boycotted him as a Hindu. Ultimately, in order to complete his education, he became a convert and accepted Christianity. He became a doctor in medicine in 1904. A writer, he wrote a book on the history of Khasi history.

Even as late as the beginning of the twentieth century, though on the one hand, assimilation was taking place between the orthodox and Christian Khasis, still a certain mutual antagonism remained. The following entry in the diary of the late U Jeebon Roy will testify to this.

21st November, 1901: We talked and came to a decision. The teacher in the Christian school should not halt there as it was 'prohibitive and sinful' to say any words.

5th December, 1901: We arrived at Mairang and no Christian would give us place to stay. U Jeebon Roy was an orthodox Khasi, influenced by the missionaries propagated at Cherra and Shillong. He felt that the orthodox Khasis should also be educated. As a result, he started the school at Shillong. His sons were educated in England. While his six sons had Bengali names, his four daughters had Khasi names.

he number of educated Khasis began to i
 thanks mainly to the efforts of the missi
 there were more Christian Khasis tha
 18, two Khasi males passed the B.A. exa
 tta University. In 1905, six Khasis ha
 e. Khasi women also began to occupy im
 iety in their own rights, by virtue of edu
 was the first female matriculate (around
 14 (Chyne) was the first graduate (19
 e was the first lady minister in Assam,
 adullah around 1937, ten years before
 ountry. Female literacy began to grow :
 1932 states that the Khasi women oc
 in India in the pre-Independence day
 y. Khasi women began to work increas
 s, teachers and magistrates.

The following table shows the percentage
 d Khasi and Jaintia Hills District :

	<i>Year</i>	<i>Persons</i>	<i>A</i>
ntage of literacy	1901	6.72	
uding the age	1911	6.51	
up 0-4.	1921	9.05	1
	1931	10.94	1
	1941	16.15	2
	1951	22.96	2
	1961	37.15	4
	1971	39.69	4

As noted earlier, the missionaries started
 er the cause of conversion. Later, the Pre
 e that no convert should be admitted
 ut first learning to read, exceptions bein
 ase of those far too old to learn.¹⁵ Othe
 orts for spreading education among th
 ally intelligent, the Khasis have made full
 a which 100 years of devoted work by the
 available. Educated Khasis, both wom

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elsewhere to work and Khasi lady doctors and health visitors were to be found in many parts. It was largely due to the education by missionaries and the encouragement for leaders in Church organisation that the Khasis began to express their opinions with frankness and developed a new awareness of political, economic and social changing times. *Ka Riti* in Khasi does not mean a blind adherence to old antiquated institutions but an adoption of certain decrees and a development of this tribal community by good leadership and efficient administration.¹⁶ The progress was aided on account of education imparted by the missionaries and excellent leadership as has been noted. Thanks to the good cultural heritage, the sober and hard work of the missionaries and closeness to the seat of power in the valley of Assam, Khasi leadership along with the development of the hill areas brought about a peaceful change in the Khasi Hills and other neighbouring areas of Meghalaya whereas in some other tribal areas like Nagaland and Mizoram, violence had broken out. In view of the role of the Ramakrishna Mission in the hills of nationalism, and preaching, like the Universal Brotherhood of man. Thus the Khasis have adopted their own religion and of a much wider education imparted by the missionaries. The status of women and children, as stated by the missionaries, with communication of new ideas and the ability to think themselves independently. The importance of education did not wane. Children too became more educated, courteous and well-mannered. For the children of the hills were a boon and a major break-through from the primitive and unhygienic lives their earlier generations led. The role and significance of the education imparted by the missionaries in the Khasi Hills can hardly be overestimated and emphasized. If the historical accident of the arrival of the Christian Mission had not occurred, the clock of social and educational field in Khasi Hills would be behind the rest of the century and the quality would have been much poorer and possibly far less too.

charge is often levelled in the country the
 areas, the foreign missionaries, through
 ted by them, alienated the tribals from th
 n culture and slowed down the prog
 ation. The charge sounds unfair when s
 d. The missionaries were from a fore
 each a foreign religion. In preparing
 ure and in teaching in the schools, the
 their own culture, civilisation and child
 ranslated their own literature, depicting
 oreign land than that nearer the hills. If
 one to work in those days, they would ha
 ng upon Indian literature and examples.
 arly period of missionary work in the Kha
 of Indian nationalism in the modern fo
 ed. In fact, in these distant lands, the ecl
 e approaching Independence were not
 or two black sheep among the later day
 indulged, in some other parts of the north
 cking against the interests of the count
 of missionaries as a class was humani
 s have yielded positive results for the nati
 Another criticism against the missionary
 n is that it did not foster or provide an
 ce education resulting in imbalance, with r
 anities. It is true that the youth of Khasi
 of the hill areas in north east India, show
 umanities, rather than science subjects. I
 the new found written literature promote
 fferent forms of expression and this was f
 rocesses of the Church, such as Sunday s
 cal church elders, etc. To this extent, sci
 vely receded into the background. Abs
 al climate could also have led to a lac
 ce. But, so was the case in many oth
 abroad where traditional subjects in hum
 e graduate higher status and better plume
 ce education.

Literature

The impact of the missionary on Khasi is reflected in the new literature; it mirrors the ethno-cultural change. Bareh tells us that according to tradition the Khasi Script was lost during an incendiary attack. Another story states that it was lost in a flood.¹ They had their own script, the Khasis in the past traded with their neighbours—Bengali, Assamese, Persian and others—keeping records. The present Khasi alphabet, of which note of, was derived from the Roman alphabet introduced as late as 1841. It was then that the Khasi script was born.

Thomas Jones deserves the title of the father of Khasi literature. He gave a script to a hitherto spoken language and printed the first books in Khasi. The missionaries who followed him also produced literature, mainly for use in the churches and schools. As the aim was to spread Christianity, the early Khasi literature was mostly religious. Rev. William and Mrs Lewis who came to Jaintia in 1843, stayed here for 18 years and left for England in 1861. During these early and uncertain years, they introduced the Khasi script into Khasi, and their contribution can not be overestimated. William Lewis translated the New Testament into Khasi, some Gospels and Books of the Bible. The first printed copies of the latter arrived in 1861 and people flocked in crowds singing hymns and giving thanksgiving to meet the first consignment. The later years saw the publication of a Khasi Bible, completion of the Translation of the Bible, Shakespeare and a series of 'Khasi readers' for school use. Ethical lessons such as Khasi *phawars* (oral traditions), traditional lines during the bone-burial ceremonies, sports, bear hunt, taking of enemy heads, etc. were included. *Meikha* (the father's mother). By mid-19th century efforts were also made to publish the character of the Khasi language such as the vocabulary, syntax and grammar.

In 1889, the first periodical in the Khasi language was published, and around this time began the growth of modern Khasi literature.²⁰ In 1895 a non-religious

hly, *U Khasi Mynra* was started by Hormi. Its articles of current interest were published in an epitomised anti-missionary, or rather in opposition to the prevailing Christian trends. Some of the responsible for cultural awakening were Jeel, Berry, Rabon Singh, and Sib Charan Roy. They possessed playlets but no original drama was created. The first historical work of the Khasis, *Ka Ri Khasi* by B.K. Sarma Roy was published in an outline of modern history in Khasi. Much was learned from *Cherrapunjee*, and it was the *Cherrapunjee* which was adopted for the writing of Khasi in the thirteenth century. The place is also noted for its refined moral and religious of native traditions.

Journalism also grew steadily. Journals started by missionaries expressed views counter to those of the missionaries started by Christian missionaries. Hormi's journals were powerful vehicles of Khasi literature. Many journals are many.

The third phase of modern Khasi literature began in 1940. During these years, cultural reorientation; eminent writers were Homiwei Lyngdoh, G. Costa, H. Elias, T. Cajee and the late Tham. They wrote on a variety of subjects. In 1926, the first novel, a translation from the *Arabian Nights*, *U Alladin*, was published. The first Khasi novel, *U Alladin*, was published. The first Khasi novel, *U Alladin*, was published. In 1924, an adaptation of the first Khasi novel, *U Alladin*, was published. In 1928, M. Bareh also published the first Khasi novel, *U Alladin*. Grammar, D.N.S. Wahlang published the first Khasi novel, *U Alladin*. Studies—a model English Translation of the first Khasi novel, *U Alladin*.

The *Seng Khasi*, a cultural organisation, published the first non-Christian song-book. The first poem was by Radhon. Soso Tham wrote on love, past and present philosophy; among his poems, *Ki Hynniew* is a classic.

Themes such as patriotism, religion, origin of Khasi culture and poetry were incorporated in the literature. In the contemporary Khasi literature, in 1941, many text-books and new journals

cts were published. Drama, folk tales and a literature e.g. educational articles and evoked much interest. Among many el a taste for Western literature popularise Renderings from English classics are man there grew a pride in the indigenous K ndian literature. The last was due to the n missionaries.

Khasi is a living language and has inexhaust dialectical variation is immense and yet mo simulate words, technical terms, idioms, etc cts into the *Cherra* form of speech—a c missionaries and educationists did good *Cherra* dialect the medium of instruction ceeful and effective dialect and has the p and assimilation.

n sum, the impact of the missionary on wo-fold: it introduced the Khasis to Ch precepts and western literature; on the on, it also awakened the patriotic fervour the Khasi world-view in its different aspe iting for the first time. Another feeling g to a nation—the history of India ancient epics were translated. Thus, for th is were required to think beyond their are ince the writing of Khasi in the first quart n Bengali alphabet, there has been a phe e Khasi literature. There now exists a dev e language. It is evident that under the ology and secularism language will play a ringing cohesion and change in tribal Chaudhari.²¹ The extensive literature th i is both religious and secular, and it o l growth to missionary efforts.

ation

Although drinking was forbidden and tem bristianity, Khasi *Niam* and Hinduism, l earlier, were habitual drinkers. In ch abstention from liquor was made

ership. But, the vast number of stills and the liquor could be obtained were a contribution to the Christian community and caused.

Christian missionaries condemned gambling and also said that it was a sin to earn one's living. Despite this, gambling was very popular. As a rule, women did not gamble. Playing cards and card games spread to the Khasi. *Housie* was popular in clubs. *Lottery* was popular in Shillong but it was stopped ten years ago (betting on archery, the game of the Khasi was popular in Shillong but it led to an acute law and order problem though banned a few years ago, it continued in a different form. On market days too, men relaxed and played archery still remained the game of the Khasi. Its popularity waned. In certain areas, games were displayed and there were regular archery competitions either weekly or fortnightly. In certain areas, cash prizes were performed. Sentimentality is characteristic about most orthodox Christians. A (possibly, a Deputy Commissioner) informant's aged father. Once, a *Syiem*, the ruler, invited the dignitary for hunting. He said that the ruler carried only two arrows. When he asked the host, the latter replied, 'I must try my first attempt. Otherwise, the second arrow will miss the target. And truly, the animal was killed with the first arrow.'

Hunting was much liked in some villages. In some part of the *Lyngnam* areas, it no longer remained a sport or an occupation. In the interior, the people used earlier weapons. The well-to-do Khasis used guns. Fishing remained popular but more as a hobby. The common way was to poison small fish with that stupefied fishes. Traps, nets and fish were used. Later, under the influence of western missionaries and other Europeans in and around Shillong, fishing with the line became a favourite sport. Many other western games viz. cricket, football, etc.

ne popular. In the interior, ring-tennis o
ing were also played by girls. Among
m, Ludo, Snakes and Ladders were popul
ock-fighting became a game of the pa
ger male section of a few villages. The Ch
s being an out-of-date native sport. The
a of the people later on made them shy of
sports

ince villagers had little time for leisure, c
few in rural areas. The touring cinema
ries and Block Development Officers) was
first film was shown in the Khasi Hills
ng has now six cinema houses and both H
are liked. The drama also now became
er *Jatra* parties (cultural drama troupes)
i Hills from Sylhet and dramas or playlets
arly. In the Khasi Hills around 1925, sta
ets became an annual feature. New themes
adopted from Bengali and Western dra
i drama is on the life of U Tirot Singh, a

ic, Dancing and Art

The impact of missionaries in the sphere
r and revolutionary in magnitude. W
ivilisation which came with the missiona
ry and a half, shaped the Khasi musical
g the Christians who formed a substantial
lation. As a consequence, musical com
missionary period leaned towards a W
in form and melody but in harmony a
It came to stay as a popular school of mu
e taught and assimilated mainly through
urches. For this, the missionaries produc
ern hymns in Khasi and added notations
sang these hymns in unison in the ch
e false note. Earlier, Khasi songs had a
, themes of love, devotion and joy were
was the influence of western and eastern
ast century, the Welsh Mission imparted
inging on solfa notations while the I

had a good number of musicians and poets. In view of the growing popularity of music and musical arts among the Khasis it was expressed by many that the original songs would disappear. The Khasis, like most tribals, are good at picking up melodies. A few Khasis, under the influence of Bengalis, Assamese and Hindi films and records, had picked up Indian music. Devotional songs were sung at meetings in the villages of *Shella* and *Shella*. Assamese songs and *Rabindra Sangeet* were also sung by Khasis who have cultivated Indian music. The Khasis had no solo dancing, their dances were group dances and most of these were religious. The influence of Western culture, ball-room dancing, was not felt among the Christian Khasis. Some young Khasis took a fancy for Indian dancing too. There was no particular liking for sculpture and painting among the Khasis in this period.

Religion and Crime

Despite the sober influence of missionaries there was an increase in the incidence of crime, indicating that crime had multiplied. Human sacrifices persisted only till 1850 onwards and have not disappeared. Instances have been cited of human sacrifice as late as 1932. A couple of years ago, in the very village of *Shella*, a child was kidnapped and it was suspected that he was offered as a victim to the Serpent-master *U Thlen*. A Khasi from the *Lyngnam* area mentioned that he had been murdered and the manner indicated that he had been offered to be a sacrifice to *U Thlen*.

Villages

In early days, Khasi villages were sparsely distributed on hill-tops, these varied in size. Some villages ranged from three to four hundred people. There was a significant growth in the number of villages. Villages near urban areas or in places like *Cherrapunji* and *Shella* make apt instances *viz.* *Cherrapunji* and *Shella*. In other places villages were grouped in

appearance was one big village with large dots within it. As a contrast, smaller villages had only two or three houses. Bigger villages grew. While few villages had grown three or four times, others grew twice-fold; by contrast, those that grew. Some rural areas grew because of missionaries which attracted more residents. *Ingkhlaw*, *Kharang* too grew partially because of the Unitarian missionary, Margarete. These stood to gain on account of Government work that was earlier done by missionaries. Development started under the community development programme and *Lyngnam* areas were, comparatively, where any new village sprang up. There was no growth but by small paths. Earlier, the villages were with stockades, deep ditches and massive walls. Hill sides were thickly-studded with sharp stakes driven in the ground. Later, most villages had gates at the entrance and there were many shops in them. Small tea shops, bakeries, carpenter shops, shops selling ready-made garments were common and, in some progressive villages, co-operative societies sprung anew. A village had a young Khasi man as the secretary of the club who spoke fluently and had many ambitious projects. The spirit of cooperation ultimately meant a spirit of unity prevailed in the larger *ing* or the *kpoh*. The first member was born in the larger *ing* or *kpoh* and was engaged to the cultural club as a matter of course. They were grouped together because of certain common interests. Earlier Christian villages had churches built in the centre. In this section in many villages stayed apart. In these areas acquired names indicating the Christian influence. *Mairang* village, the area where the Christians were known as Mission *Mairang*. *Cherra* village had a church. In *Jaiaw*, near Shillong, most of the houses were owned by the Christians. Owing to greater improved methods of communication and transportation, there was a greater horizontal and vertical spread of the population, a point made before. Owing

action, stratification in Khasi society was e. The surprisingly great and complex change over the last fifty years effected changes. In many villages, the very composition through geographical and social mobility, spread of education and urban influence. Village endogamy pattern among the Khasis. When there was either because the individual migrated, or Memorial stones were no longer built as in the past. The missionaries retained the earlier Khasi names of villages. These begin with *Um*, *Lait*, *Soh* and *Maw* or *shnong*.

The development of the Upland Khasi District with the establishment of the State administrative system in 1874. Since then, the features of the district have changed greatly. Shillong, once a tiny hamlet, is now a busy, modern town. The Khasi elite reside, mixing with various other groups of interest and occupations.

Culturally, a marked difference was seen between the villagers at this juncture. Bareh observed that the interior who adopted Christianity were more civilised than the non-Christians and had an air of superiority. Gurdon too commented on the progress of the Khasis owing to the efforts of the missionaries. 'The Welsh missionaries have done and are doing much good amongst these people. 'It would be a pity to arrest the progress of the mission work in the Khasis,' he writes around 1914, 'if it were possible.' He adds that the Khasis converted to Christianity with much earnestness, as was evident from the large number of converts.²⁴

ing

The education imparted by the missionaries was of a high standard. Bareh notes that the houses of the Christians are far superior, especially where the European missionaries.²⁵ A marked change in the social life became visible a fact evident during my time.

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houses were oval-shaped, low, thatch-roofed
es with walls of stone, roofs of corrugated
windows and chimneys to let out smoke, w
. The present houses called 'Assam ty
r walls made of bamboo mats or reeds wi
after the devastating earthquake of 18
r structures were destroyed. Japanese exp
nvited by the British Government to stu
on mentions that around 1914, European
e architecture of the Khasis especially in
Jhar, Cherrapunjee, and Shillong.²⁷ Some
rugated iron, glass windows and chimneys
n houses had one small opening resembling
was no chimney, the smoke had to find its
could. A definite change here is noticeable
would at once recognise that in many
es were not made now in the traditional
g gable with low roof, on store stilts, with
s for living and cooking. This change
mer houses with air circulation, ventilat
ng could be explained as a manifestatio
ence. But it would not give the picture of a
new innovation was no doubt adopted thro
d of skill in carpentry and the Christian w
The very concept of housing and living cha
e influence of Christian missionaries. F
tility alone but beauty too became the crit
ows made more light and air possible. Sp
ery household task such as cooking, was
bathing. Domestic animals were kept in c
ound. An elementary system of sewage wa
away the waste. The space around the ho
ow vegetables and flowers. Houses began
ng with a little opening in it that serve
tian houses stood distinct from the othe
e; they were neater and better in a
tian influence was also visible in the
shed the house. With reference to the furn
utensils too, Christian civilisation has left
houses of even affluent Khasis were spa

bamboo mats and stools, earthen and, owing to Christian influence, more household articles were equipped the houses of the wealthy. There were iron beds, cupboards, chairs, almirahs, and other articles of the well-to-do Khasis. The kitchen was equipped with pots, pans, and other vessels to store food. These were commonly used by both Christians and non-Christians. But, their use was restricted to the serving of food; meals were normally served on bamboo mats. Houses of Christians were better equipped than those of non-Christians. With picture frames, flower pots, and small flowering plants, bushes and trees also reflected more taste.

House-warming Ceremonies

Earlier ceremonies connected with house-warming were held on a much smaller scale initially and were not widely passed by, both by rural and urban Khasis. The site for the house was chosen by the village headman according to the needs of the man. If a small hut was to be built, the man got ready the materials required and his neighbours helped him build it. Most Christians did not, as in the early days, break an egg to see if they would be lucky or not. The houses were built by hired labour. When the beams of the walls were up and the roof was ready to be built, there was a feast, which was held by all sections of the village. It was a merry-making on the night before the house was completed. There was dancing, eating and drinking. The floor was strewn with rice and poured on the floor. The merry-making continued for several hours of the morning. These ceremonies were usually observed in the *Bhoi* and *Lyngnam* areas, which were comparatively backward.

Earlier, a person could build only one house for his needs; but now people could own a number of houses and throw these out. This was due to the phenomenon of Shillong in particular. Whoever shifted to Shillong had a house-warming system according to the custom of the Khasis.

Communications

Phenomenal growth of the Khasi Hills, of led to improvement of communications grew on a large scale and the bullock-cart or pony or mule cart drawing pikes of heavy nature. Although porters still carry loads of heavy goods, a number of vehicles also ply on the road.

Peace and Warfare

Internal warfare ceased completely and martial law became obsolete.

Economy

Khasi economy and industry changed very much, due to the efforts of the missionaries. Government too. David Scott, agent to the Government of North-East Frontier Region during the British period (called Iskat Sahib by the Bengalis), gave a new impetus to the Khasis. He introduced the cultivation of potatoes, beets and cabbages. These crops changed the culture and economy also, the diet and the life of the people to some extent. A superior quality of produce—cows, pigs, cocks, fowls, geese, and the introduction of cattle with Holstein-Freisian blood to the Khasi Hills long ago and it is in these hills that the best bred cattle of the entire north-east India are now bred. As weaving declined in the face of stiff competition from the markets in the plains. The missionaries introduced spinning, baking and printing. In many places schools were opened by them for imparting training in various trades, such as leather goods and curing of leather for shoes, etc. Formal centres were opened by the missionaries for imparting academic and vocational training and for the advancement of education. These institutions gradually and helped the spread of vocational education among greater numbers.

Change was also noticeable in Khasi agriculture. The contribution has been mentioned elsewhere. Some of the crops were grown in the Khasi Hills; some of the crops were introduced by the missionaries. Others were developed by the Khasis.

ernment and the initiative of private individuals. New crops grown were soya beans, (cassia esculenta), etc. The earlier method (slash and burn) slowly receded and were replaced by rice cultivation which became popular. In the early years there were attempts at permanent cultivation of vegetables, etc. The hoe and the sickle were still used but the plough was also used in certain areas and certain villages of *Shella* area. The British taught modern techniques in agriculture and encouraged the use of pesticides and fertilizers. The Revenue Department also provided grants to the paddy fields to impound and store rain water. In 1956, the State Government offered donations for renovation of the orange gardens. The slash and burn method is still used only in the Khasi and Jaintia Hills, among other regions. The region, has the old *Jhum* (slash and burn) method which has been replaced to a great extent by permanent cultivation. With the British annexation of the earlier independent States, some villages e.g. *Tyrna* came under the control of the British who installed a headman of each village as the administrative head. Villages were grouped as British villages. In these, the cultivators paid a tax of two to four per house to the British. Since independence, the tax is paid to the District Council. No tax is levied on the hill people instead.

Rudimentary arts and crafts such as metal work and the plaiting of wicker baskets were common. A woman housewife to supplement her income on her own household needs. On the average, one or two baskets could be made in one day. The number of baskets made as cheaper iron goods were available for sale. In trade, the Khasis allege, was suppressed by the British. In the early days the trade of the Khasis and Jaintias, was, for the most part, trade by barter. The means extensive. They took down cotton cloth, tools of husbandry manufactured from crude iron, iron tools, yams grown on the flank of the hills, quantities of potato, honey, beeswax, and other products brought back in exchange salt, tobacco

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horned cattle, goats, pig, poultry, cotton and other trifling articles. The exports and imports in value and were estimated at about Rs. 10 lakhs, as recorded by Allen, Member Board of Khasi Hills. As for division of labour, among the Khasis, a traditional rule that women engage in trade in markets whether on a large or a small scale. They carry goods from field to market but they are not the actual scene of the selling and buying. The responsibilities on the part of the women are controlled either by the uncle, brother, even the son or in many cases, they form separate domestic families. Control over the trade appears more marked where business is large. Among the Khasis, residence in the village is an indication of economic autonomy. The changes that came up generally among the poor (not only to some of these) are: porters, carriers, masons, road and house builders, cleaners, money sweepers, etc.

Property

Earlier, Khasi concept of property included land, silver coins and *sbai* (shells), personal belongings, groves, paddy fields, cattle, poultry, household equipments—tools, weapons, etc. The introduction of money had no impact on this concept. After the introduction of paper money too. So, cash incomes were kept in the bank. As the Khasi men's own rights and women became increasingly independent, authority of the maternal uncle diminished. The hold of the clan on landed properties weakened.

Growth of industries led to the indiscriminate cutting of trees and there was destruction of forests that took place. These offences are dealt with by the law. Due to the influence of Christianity, and the opening of schools which led to more openings by way of education, converts, ideas began to change. Most disputes were settled in accordance with earlier customs. The growing belief was that conversion was

re, in the right of inheritance to any kind of property. Christianity, Hinduism or Islam have had no effect on the Khasi law relating to property or inheritance. There was no provision for adopting a male. If there was adoption, it was always a female who had to be adopted. The religions have made no impact on the law of inheritance. But, a new tendency was that when a man died, he had the right to give it to his son. Before, no one as such could claim it. The law was changed, for the right to make wills regarding property. Two new changes in Khasi law relating to inheritance, that sons now could be given a fair share and daughters too were treated in a just manner. The law was not as handicapped as it was before except where it was necessary for the performance of religious rites. Earlier, an orthodox Khasi marrying a Christian lost the right to inherit property.

Missionary impact is reflected in Khasi law. The law of inheritance remained the same viz. that rights and obligations, and conversely that obligations flow from rights, there were some changes owing to the fact that members of the family were converts, and the law was not orthodox. Also, marriages between Christians and Khasis led, ultimately, to a settlement of disputes which was not biased against the converts and the problem has been mentioned in brief before. Converts had the same rights to property, or their social rights as the orthodox. But, owing to the religious differences, the law was not as strict and their good sense prevailing, as also the fact that converts and orthodox Khasis, belonged to the same community, customs grew and there were mutual adjustments. These customs became so powerful and widespread that they were incorporated in Khasi law. At present, the same rules of inheritance as the orthodox. In suit No 41 of 1833, a *Synteng* case, the District Commissioner said, 'There is evidence that conversion to Christianity separated a man from his community and he was outcasted; he can succeed to no property.'

ives. Property that he would be entitled to m.' This hostility ceased after some years. It was allowed by social custom to inherit from the mother. During 1916-1918, there arose in one case the division of a Christian *Khadduh*. It was the custom that if a *Khadduh* became a convert, she should have an equal share in the property which accrued to the family's religion, and not the entire share. In general, the division of property by the mother and religious toleration of the Khasis are the subject of many cases in the Courts.

Earlier, in a sense, the position of the Khasis was not so. Later, the legal position of the Khasis was the same. The Khasis, were, at this stage in a transitional period of maternal-paternal division of inheritance. The children of a Khasi woman and a non-Khasi husband were entitled to inherit the property of the former. According to the rules, the property of the non-Khasi husband was transferable to the children. If a man abandoned his children or left her a widow, she would have their shares from her share according to Khasi custom. On the other hand, the man took up the children, they would grow up to be non-Khasis according to his custom.

Political Set-Up

In the later Khasi society, the earlier political system has undergone minor yet significant variations. In the description of the early and recent political system, the following words have been used to express the following ideas:

Tribe: A politically or socially coherent group occupying or claiming a particular territory.

Chieftainship: Office of the ruler or chieftain.

Wing: The State.

Unwritten Constitution: The unwritten constitution of the State.

Durbar: The political assembly.

The first Anglo-Khasi contact, through the Company, was in the year 1765. After that, the political history of this area was the Treaty of Yandabo (1826), by which Burma surrendered the province to the British. In 1829, there was an uprising of the Khasis, the good work being carried on by the British in the valley and Sylhet, which was caused by the harsh treatment towards foreign domination. The British military at *Nongkhlaw*, their false promises and the treatment of the poor inhabitants, and the completely sapped the civil sense of the Khasis to lose confidence in the good work. In 1829, U Tirot Singh made detailed plans for the rebellion from the country. He abdicated his crown in favour of Singh Manick. In 1830, the rebellion was finally endorsed. The Khasis were brutally dealt with by the British. The people were brutally dealt with by the British. David Scott and his friends were greatly impressed by the uprisings and even more impressed by the acts of warfare which underlined the Khasi spirit. Throughout the period, the Khasis showed an unflinching spirit. In April 1833, the battles were waning and the Khasis breathe an air of peace. The Khasis, though a democracy were vigilant even after the rebellion. They rejected any terms that were illegally imposed on them. In this year, Tirot Singh, the rebel leader, was killed and the uprisings quelled, after four years. He was taken prisoner and died at Darjeeling. The Khasi and Jaintia Hills were annexed to the British Empire. The ancestral kingdom of the old Shillong was partitioned into *Knyrim* (to the east) and *Shillong*. This led to the diminishing of the friendly relations that had evolved since 1765. In 1864, the capital of the district shifted from *Shillong* to *Shillong*. In 1874, the new province was created with Shillong as its capital. Around 1880, a sense of nationalism among the Khasis. In 1884, the province of Assam with the United Province of Bengal and Bihar became summer headquarters. The province was again separated in 1912.

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The year 1923 saw the formation of the Khasi State and the years 1934-1935, the Khasi State. Effort by the latter to receive a seat in the Constituent Assembly of India did not prove successful. In 1947, when India became independent, *Syiem* Wyclif wanted the Khasi State to remain independent. Ultimately, the Khasi State joined India. In 1953, under Article 244 and the Constitution of India, District councils were set up in tribal areas. In 2 April, 1970, a sub-state of Meghalaya was created and on 21 January, 1972, was born the State of Meghalaya.

Throughout the centuries, the Khasis have maintained their political independence, an opinion voiced by many writers. The ancient Khasi rights, privileges and customs of the country have been embodied in many laws, regulations and so made possible for the British to rule. A characteristic feature of the British administration of the British areas now known as north-east India was the transfer of powers of administration were transferred from the British to the Khasis separated from their respective parent States. The powers and functions of the Deputy Commissioner were transferred to the Khasi District Council and the status of the Khasi native was improved. Previously, there were altogether 25 small Khasi Districts. Under the new Constitution of India, a District Council was set up (as mentioned earlier), to manage the internal affairs of the tribes, such as land rights, education, health, and social services, by universal adult franchise. It replaced the District Advisory Council which had no constitutional powers. The new District Council has legislative authority in respect of certain matters mentioned in the sixth schedule of the Constitution, under articles 244 (2) and 275 (II). The Council has the power to manage any forest not being a reserved forest, to regulate the use of water causes and jhum cultivation, to regulate village communications, to regulate the trade and commerce, and public health, to fix rules for the succession of chiefs or headmen, to decide the disputes of property and handle marriages and divorces. It is noteworthy that despite the advent of new

District Councils, like the British, *Kyiemships* as an office though powers are in sharp contrast to what happened in the District Council abolished all old chieftains and village councils.

The missionaries had no direct impact on the thought, yet, there are some changes in the thought due to the education and democratic principles by the Christian missionaries, and later, due to the ideas of nationhood by the Rama Krishna movement. It was prominent in spheres where control was taken over by new bodies, the District Councils and the schemes by Government. Earlier, much was done by the missionaries, but now, the political complexion. Among others, functions of the District Council was to establish schools, dispensaries, markets, cattle pounds, roads and waterways, and in particular the political language and manner in which primary education was conducted.

Christian missionaries brought with them western thought, education and, to some extent of western culture. It has been seen that the societal impact of the missionaries was further, at a superficial level. The influence of the missionaries with the years; yet, the factors pulling the society in different directions were equally strong. A strong sense of nationalism and culture and religion persisted and an attempt was made to control the effects of western ideology. The influence of the missionaries who were from the west was overshadowed by the rule of the British and the general consequences of the British rule. Against this new background, the demand for political rights intensified in the Khasi Hills, and the number of western missionaries also increased. The growth and because of the education imparted by the missionaries, local leadership of a high calibre emerged on a large scale. As the demand for political rights increased, misgivings arose in the minds of the British and the Indian public. Stormy debates took place in the British and Indian Parliaments. The demand for political rights in the Khasi Hills was not because it was peaceful; all Khasis spoke

Meghalaya becoming a full-fledged State, the change in the political set-up disrupted and generated a new thinking process. Since the structure of Khasi society broke up, and education came to have a new dimension in the Khasi

Khasi 'Niam'—religious belief and practice

The *Niam* (religion) of the Khasis had been passed from generation to generation. Missions and all of new religious influences in the society, which sometimes inevitably had their impact on the *Niam*. Cults and rituals had formed important parts of the religion. A cult included the collection of beliefs and practices associated with a given deity, e.g. the cult of U Thlen (the serpent mother) or the cult of ancestor worship. Rituals involved in the worship of deities included consulting particular persons (magicians or rainmakers) for omens or their symbolic representations. Over the years, the Khasis with missionaries and other religions like Christianity, Hinduism and Islam, certain changes in earlier religious beliefs and practices. Some changes had grown gradually. The more significant changes were direct causes and spread effects from other religions to the influence of Christianity and the missionaries than any other religious influences. Hinduism was marginal while that of Islam was negligible. As religion pervades almost all spheres of human existence, some of the observations below are those made earlier in the chapter under the heading of 'so, as observations here are presented data from informants examined in connection with the initial 25 years or so, after Christianity arrived in the region. The mingling between the Christian and the Khasi became smoother. Friction lessened over the years or so, it was clear that Christianity had taken root in the Khasi Hills. Christianity was accepted by the rulers—it was the religion of the rulers and they were acquiring material benefits. The foreigners, on their part, very gifted, devoted and sincere.

homogeneous nature of the population due to the influence of the missionaries has also led to the decline of some of the old customs. In this area, the cult of the *U Thlen* still has a strong hold. Belief in the earlier superstitions, *sang* (spirits) had declined much more among the educated orthodox; ancestor-worship and the *U Thlen* (covenant of the cock with God) had been abandoned by the Christians. Yet, in times of crisis, many still offer *Knia* (worship) to ward off the influence of evil spirits. Though belief in divination and divinatory techniques had not vanished totally. Divination still occurs in every Khasi house and was used for various matters, e.g. fixing the date of marriages and other matters. Some rural Christians still retain some of these customs. Orthodox and rural Khasis were more conservative. They were involved in *Jutang*. There was no change in the traditional religion but priests are in lesser demand now. The educated and priests look elsewhere for new religious ideas. The opinion of liberal orthodox informants was that originally, the Khasis were hostile to the foreign religion. Their own religion had ceased to give spiritual satisfaction, the novelty of a new religion preached by the missionaries, the class of rulers, drew them in its net. The foreign missionaries were gifted, qualified and soon succeeded in establishing Christianity. There were no mass conversions except in some villages or hamlets and even there, the inhabitants have accepted the religion willingly—out of conviction and not for material benefits, but no force was used. In the absence of material advantages accruing from conversions, and because the missionaries stressed the spiritual aspects of *Khasi Niam*, Christianity took roots in the hills and stayed. The Hindu missionaries had greater resources. Moreover, the foreign missionaries had painted a dark picture of Hindus. Caste-system, child-marriages, idol-worship, prohibition of the eating of beef, treatise of women associated with Hinduism in the eyes of the Khasis. Moreover, the resources of the Hindu missionaries were far less than those of their foreign counterparts. They lacked the backing of the official machinery.

ama Krishna missionaries did not come of conversion but to spread education and services, and stressed the depth of the thing universal brotherhood, they were w is. Local missionaries were in a sense clo the foreign missionaries were more pa course among the believers of differen g the Khasis was little or none in the people mix more freely; but, the mixing ough beliefs in certain earlier cults have s and ceremonies have been dropped, mo among all Khasis, some superstitions a *U Thlen*) still hold a grip of some Khasi Christians. A case of kidnapping in the years ago was cited where it was suspected to be a sacrifice to *U Thlen*. Sacr tedly was also still in vogue. Among the of illness, some worship is offered to ated with the sickness. Some Christians, ated bodies. So, their minds are still dor i beliefs and the acceptance of Christi Christians do not believe in the *juang* r urban orthodox Khasis Beliefs in divin ed among all Khasis; the nature of pri ged. One informant felt that among m ction about Christianity was genuine; el in strength, even after foreign rulers ha eeling was that Christianity removed m *angs* by rationalisation. They noted th u influence, Khasi religion became p stic; originally, it was monotheistic. In s is influenced by Hinduism began to worsh ar and Lakhi—all Hindu deities.²⁹

The Christian informants said that Christia e Khasi Hills because of its superiority, a iques, patience, perseverance and benevo the foreign missionaries. The initial hos ent sects had died down, but the mixi ers of different faiths was still outward. M were superior in every way to orthodox K

called by some Christians 'Pagans' and 'said that Christians did not believe in... tian missionaries were responsible for dis... had given up ancestor worship and other... hood among the Khasis, they said uni... e of priesthood among the Khasis had... Khasis were going to priests and on... result, priests were opting for different... ing on Hinduism, they said that the Vaish... onaries as such but some Khasis had volu... was now a dead sect. The Brahmo impa... The Rama Krishna Mission had done g... i Hills by preaching a secular outlook an... of nationhood, but its resources and wo... nsidered on par with those of the west... nfluence of Hinduism among the Khasis i... restricted to *Shella, Cherra, Sohbarpunjee* to Shillong.

A majority of the Presbyterians examined... pts have been made by some orthodox K... olics to revive certain cults in simplifi... perstitions, witchcrafts, *sang*, black magic... died down among the Christians and... odox Khasis. This was due to the painstaking missionaries who also trained local... admitted that in some areas, poor an... believe in these. They said that beliefs in... disappeared among Christians, educa... odox Khasis. But, some Christians still... occasions, e.g. fixing a date for a marriag... ulty, to trace its cause. Even though cult... ng Christians, some did practice a few cu... ck for thanksgiving or propitiation of th... that many Christians did believe in b... ery but these things were unmentionable in... was argued that such practices helped... no-dynamic equilibrium and self-confi... that many Christians had not heard... stors—*Ka Iawbei, U Thawlang* and *U Siaw*... d of them, and respected them but did not

younger generation of Christian Khasis orthodox Khasis and most of the inhabitants of *nyngnam* areas, notably inhabitants of villages. This population, had not even heard of such customs. Funeral ceremonies had been given up entirely; even among the orthodox Khasis. Burial was no longer observed. Erection of memorial stones had been given up entirely. Very few families of orthodox Khasis kept the bones of members of the dead in a cromlech. They felt that this was the relic of a primitive race, while others said that this was the relic of a primitive race. Members of the *Kur* (clan) had to migrate for certain vocations; and keeping the bones proved difficult and expensive. Some of the customs in *sangs* had lessened, those to be observed by men and their husbands were still observed by Christians. All the Presbyterian informants considered by them to be a sacrifice to the teaching of the missionaries, but the customs of polygamy and concubinage were on the increase. They felt, were more frequent among the Khasis.

The Catholics asserted that there were no differences in their religion and the religion of the Khasis. They said that the Khasis had a concept of a saviour, the belief of heaven and the concept of heaven and hell. Some of the Catholic missionaries did not object to Khasi customs (as dancing) not opposed to Christianity. All informants felt that the customs of the Khasis were greater and hence the assimilation of Christianity had immense effect on the Khasis. They said that it had led to the unity to marriage among all sects of the Khasis. The Khasis had a sense of discipline and nationality; under their influence the Khasis discarded some of the earlier religious customs and preserving of the placenta, for instance. According to them, belief in many gods had been given up. The case is reported in *Nongstoin* that a Khasi man was killed by spikes and the manner indicated that he was sacrificed to the serpent monster *U Thlen*.

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progressive orthodox Khasis did not completely give up consultative techniques. They added that in rural interior, especially in areas near *Cherrapunji* centres of Khasi culture, such methods were still used to and with pride. Rural Khasis, both orthodox, and a large proportion of Catholics, some through their matrikin. In *nam* areas, owing to the economic backwardness, no religion is followed by the Khasi inhabitants more so in villages having a heterogeneous population. Believers of the Church of God said that superstitions were still prevalent in every way owing to the arrival of missionaries. They said that the culture shock between followers of Hinduism and Khasi culture made difficult and negligible assimilation. The superstitions such as not building a house facing west or insistence on building houses facing east, down among Christian and urban, elements, such as belief in evil spirits, or attributing misfortunes to angry deities have declined considerably even among Christians. Most believers still believe in techniques of divination. Most customs have died down among Christians and orthodox Khasis. Owing to economic reasons and the dispersal of members of the family in modern times, making it difficult for members to get together for the performance of rituals. Informants said that Christianity had succeeded in the Khasi Hills because it laid emphasis on material rather than spiritual needs, unlike other religions. They said that if material gains had been the only motive for the spread of Christianity in the Khasi Hills, why would it have gained strength in the present climate when there is no foreign aid and Government was taking up the welfare of the people increasingly? They also said that most superstitions were still prevalent among all sections of the Khasis and this was mainly due to the influence of missionaries who introduced a sense of fear and austerity and introduced an element of superstition in religious matters.

A majority of the Seventh Day Adventists

many of the earlier religious practices have been abandoned by most Christians and many orthodox Khasis, especially those who are well-to-do and belonging to affluent families.

Funeral ceremonies, for instance, were not practised by most Khasis. Very few orthodox Khasis kept the dead members of the clan in the family cromlech. This was the result of Christian influence. Belief in divination was widespread among almost all Christian and orthodox Khasis. But, in rural areas, especially in areas around *Cherra* and *Cherrapunji*, these practices were still openly practised. They felt that missionaries were more devoted to their work. They remarked that even the maintenance of churches was better in the earlier days, and added that this was due to the personal supervision of the missionaries. He said, 'The missionaries, example draws.'

Christian devotees of the Rama Krishna movement, among the orthodox Khasis, funeral practices were still practised due to Christian influence but partly due to the scarcity of funds and changing times when men were engaged in different vocations and the cost of such practices had become difficult and expensive. They said that the Christians, some religious belief and superstitions were still practised totally or partially. And yet, many Catholics, resorted to divination in times of trouble. In such cases, their matrikin performed divination on their behalf. Essentially, acculturation among the Khasis had not changed much. The frequency of such practices had reduced. The frequency of such practices was less and priests were taking to other vocations. They said that although they did not believe in the covenant of the cock with God, they respected the covenant of the orthodox Khasi religious belief. Another reason for their respecting the covenant was that it was a religious belief handed down by their ancestors. In their opinion that foreign missionaries were honest and were people with integrity and that many Khasis were to be status symbols as they belonged to the upper class; hence, whatever they said was accepted. They said that the missionaries both western and eastern.

dimension to the Khasi ethos and made it more dignified.

Muslim informants said that no attempt was made to convert the Khasis to Islam as those to preach Christianity. In 99% of Khasi-Muslim alliances, the Khasi retained Islam and ceased to be a Khasi. Ornaments and customs retained by him or her and the children were those of the Khasis. Thus, there was no assimilation whatever into Islam. They said that earlier Khasis were not observed by Christians or urban orthodox. The changes given were the change in religious practices, contact with Christianity and Hinduism and the change in life with its impersonality, the high cost of living and the distance separating family members. They said that Christian, orthodox and Hindu Khasis are united by a common feeling of distinctness had remained. The effect of the approach of the foreign missionaries was not observed by informants. They had not heard of any Khasi who had been converted.

A few non-Khasis questioned, said that among the Khasis and among Christians, cults had disappeared. Cults depending on the beliefs and finances of the Khasis, e.g., funeral, naming, etc., had disappeared in certain forms. Harvest and fertility cults were still practised in the *Bhoi* and *Lyngnam* areas. Christians (more among Catholics than Protestants) were making attempts to revive certain cults. They felt that divination had increased among rural Khasis. They said that the *U Thlen* cult was practised even among Christians. They also said that although the foreign and Indian missionaries were equally gifted and painstaking, the discipline of the Christian Khasi society was better when the missionaries were there. No force or coercion had been used by the foreign missionaries.

Since religious beliefs and practices vary widely, the Khasi society at present is in a transitional state. The influence of alien religions on Khasi society is not yet clear. Yet, the data available is enough to lead to certain conclusions.

All sections of the Khasis feel that the Khasi society needs to be examined more deeply than before.

ted as doctrines rigidly, as in the early days. Such as elaborate ceremonies, whether the marriage or funeral have been much simplified and the present Khasi religious thinking may not be elaborate. If the nuclear family of society and not the large *ing*, *kpoh*, of the younger generation of Khasis know lesser about their ancestors, perhaps the very basis of ancestor worship may be removed. Or, the ancestor worship may be, for with the scattering of members of the tribes the observance of elaborate and ancient rites is increasingly difficult. Certain other religious practices are also dying down; the two methods of divination, against the earlier five or six, are by breaking a cock; depending on the seriousness of the ailment, means available. With fewer priests available, the use of eggs in the Khasi diet, and with changing social conditions, the practice may die down although in isolated rural areas it is still strong. The nature of priesthood among the Khasis has not changed. But fewer people now approach the priests for consultations; hence, priests too, are fewer. The importance of the groups on the Khasi *Niam* is indicated.

General

Beginning from the arrival of the first foreign missionaries in the present day, the Khasi society has undergone many changes in many ways. From a near static society, it has become dynamic in a state of flux with its dynamics interacting with the social and penetrating changes that have been taking place in the process of developing in the Khasi society. The main cause and catalyst has been the work of the missionaries, as also that of the Ramakrishna Mission. Cultural changes occur in any society due to various socio-economic causes entering the evolution of the society. There are completely isolated and cloistered societies, but in a changing society, after a period of time, no one can claim to assess the changing depth and extent of the changes. Thus, in the process of evolution of the Khasi society, reactions and resistance thereto, new mosaic patterns are appearing, a kaleidoscopic pattern showing different

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the new. Nor is it possible in social and cultural studies to measure with mathematical precision and accuracy the influence of which any facet might have remained unchanged in the absence of its occurrence or influence. However, by going through the pages of various aspects of Khasi society since the arrival of the missionaries, it is possible to see how missionary influence contributed a major share in the developments in the Khasi society. There have been changes in Khasi society and culture, where changes are attributable directly to the missionaries who have acted as a multiplier and spread-effects of missionary influence. These changes hereto are noticed, like ripples from the centre to the extremities. These changes are interwoven with the changes occasioned by the changing political system, economic changes and form a complex pattern. As Nair (1965) states, there is as yet no generalised theory of cultural change which enables scholars to predict with reasonable accuracy the degree of change in various aspects of the culture when a change occurs in any one aspect.³⁰ Quantification of change is possible in such a context. Intensive data collection from societies all over the world is required for formulating any theory. A field investigation was carried out for the purpose in 1965 among the Khasis. It was found that approximately 47% of the total Khasi population are Christians...Although Christianity has had a considerable impact on the Khasi education system, it seems to have a minimal effect on the system of inheritance and residence and on the status of the eldest daughter still inherits the largest share of the property among non-Christians and Christians. The matrilineal system is still the dominant pattern among both non-Christians and Christians. It will be noticed from the data given earlier, that the impact of missionary work, mainly Christian, has wrought significant changes in Khasi society. Education, improvement of standards of living, reduction of ignorance and unfounded superstitions, development of rationality of outlook, and economic growth have been noted. Training of local people in the organisation of the Church, imparted by Christian missionaries, has led to improvement of standards of efficiency in the administrative system. Christianity has introduced rationality

city in Khasi religious beliefs. Hinduism, with its plural outlook and the Ramakrishna Mission's significant contributions; it has helped revive the indigenous religion in the face of increasing secularism and it has developed a secular outlook, modernity and progress.

As compared to Hinduism, Christianity was received in the Khasi mind more as it was more practical, unified and its missions better organised. It was also the initial advantage. Again, there were the initial advantages of Christian missionaries, such as the backing from the British Government, resources, monopoly in the field of education, material advantages such as land, money, and the like. Hinduism was introduced except in spurts and in the fringe areas. When it came, it suffered from inadequate resources and the paucity of dedicated workers. It began work in an unfriendly climate without the support of authorities and in the teeth of opposition from the established Hinduism. The Ramakrishna Mission made an impact because it was not to proselytise but to serve. It chose to work in education and medicine, secondarily. It was accepted alike by all sections of the Khasis for its practical work; many Christian leaders are among its members. Christian and Hindu missionaries have both made a contribution to the Khasi ethos; the Khasis are now more united, independent and dignified. But for the missionaries, the Khasis might have been exposed to exploitation on a larger scale. And in the absence of the missionaries, the development that the missionaries provided, the difference would have been far different.

The drawbacks of missionary work may be seen in the formation of factions among the Khasis, based on different religious approaches and ideologies. Another criticism of Christian missionary work may be said to be the lack of unity among some Christians of distinctness from the Indian cultural mainstream. As no such development was the content of the education imparted by the foreign missionaries but

cultural environment back at home, which is a considerable evidence, was without any conscious effort on the part of the missionaries to alienate the tribals from their traditional beliefs. However, this feeling of cultural displacement is not felt at least among the Khasis due to location of the province here, the economic progress, the social and political awakening. The Khasi society is, for, the Christian and non-Christian Khasis, the same stock and follow the earlier Khasi pattern. In a modernising society, the different factions in the society have only their common interests at heart and this binds the society together. Different opinions have been expressed by the tribal leaders on Christian missionary activities.

The first school has expressed the opinion that the missionaries have done a lot of good to the tribals. J. N. J. Prakasa expressed similar views. Gurdon and other scholars such as Bareh too have said that the missionaries have done immense good to the Khasis. According to them, what was worth preserving, such as social institutions, has been preserved and what deserved destruction has been destroyed (superstitions). Gurdon remarked 'Khasis are very religious. Christians often take to religion with much enthusiasm. It would be an evil day for the Khasis if anything should retard the progress of the mission work in this area. The Christian missionaries have done and continue to do a large amount of good amongst the Khasis. The missionaries who have left this area are remembered for their excellent work. Christianity is gaining in popularity, as evidenced by the increasing number of conversions. This is due to the increasing number of inter-religious marriages. The second school has taken the view that the missionaries have harmed the tribals. Elwin was a member of this school. Majumdar has observed, 'Recently the Khasis have embraced Christianity and the missionaries have introduced a lot of discomfort among them. The missionaries also expressed the opinion that missionaries have not shown understanding or even sympathy. The net effect has been to sap the vitality of the Khasi society.'

ism of primitive groups.³³ Roy, Milgrom and others in India have stressed the need for missionary enterprise in tribal areas. Bose writes of Christian missionaries among the Mundas that when the Christian missionaries came, the hold of Munda culture, which had a particular mode of life, had become feeble through the influence of Hindu landholders; they helped the Munda culture to be transmitted into gifts in case of the death of them, through a misdirected zeal for the acquisition of new grants of lands to the famishing Mundas: 'The Mundas felt a new wave of Christian culture the only means of escaping from poverty.'³⁴ The situation led to a large-scale conversion of the Mundas into Christianity and a wide spread of Hindu culture among the converts. The Mundas might be continued to be followed, but their outlook and attitude of life of the Mundas has changed. 'The Christian Mundas are not following the former mode of life; and I have even observed Christians holding the view that they form one of the tribes of Israel referred to in the Bible.'³⁵

The third school consists of public leaders who did not condemn missionary activities, but who were against conversion.

The attitude of the Government of recent years has been receptive to foreign missionaries. There is no restriction of aid from foreign countries. Yet no financial aid has been granted to some foreign missionaries who have been here for long.

As has been mentioned above, the tribal leaders of the Jharkhand Hills have given the verdict that Christianity has not destroyed their 'tribal self-hood', as is sometimes claimed. When they become Christians, we do not get detribalisation. Christianity's teaching taking away anything of value from the tribal culture is enriching it in many ways. The growth of Christianity in our language is also a definite contribution to the tribal civilisation, but to the enrichment of the tribal culture.³⁶ Further, the general opinion is

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ernment are only for the affluent and common man who needs them more. Red tape and speedy implementation of the schemes, missionary help always reaches the needy into the interior and inaccessible places. The missionaries were dedicated people and the results achieved are permanent was the opinion of more informants, of which a majority were orthodox Hindus. A minority among the informants held the opinion that although the missionaries were good yeomen's service in transforming Khasi society, since Government and voluntary bodies are doing the work they can gradually replace the missionaries. To the majority of the informants, the work done by the missionaries in the Khasi Hills is stupendous and the effort is commendable. While praising highly the role of the missionaries and the excellent work done by them, the informants feel, that local missionaries are welcome and they are closer to the people.

The charge that missionaries adopted unfair methods is not correct so far as it relates to the Khasi Hills. As pointed out by the data collected in the field, findings of the study talks with knowledgeable persons and the structure as presented in this dissertation. No unfair methods were adopted by the missionaries nor was there any coercion in the matter of proselytisation. The missionary work has been commendably honest and thorough though the main purpose was conversion. The social ethos was definitely affected as any society would have, in any case, been so affected by any social or economic force, perhaps, in the same manner as ideologies like Marxism or Socialism aim at changing the social structure. It is also not correct to say as Majumdar that the vitality of the Khasi people has been saprophytic. In fact, the people have been enriched in many ways and in other remote areas where neither a missionary has reached effectively. There are no instances, not reported, of individual observations of missionaries against the cause of national integrity. The reaction to the mounting feeling and

ry against British rule and foreign mis- instances which, if at all, would have occurred in the immediate pre- or post-independence period, can be generalised as a generalisation of missionary outlook or work. It had much effect in the Khasi Hills, just as a few drops of rain do not materially affect a harvest. The will of the Khasis to retain their unique society has been eloquently expressed when he writes that it is a proof of the existence of the Khasis that, when greater empires of the West have throughout the ages come and gone, they have retained in their hills the freedom of their small communities, the ancient ways and tenets of their race.³⁷ For about the past quarter of a century, the public, both have evinced much interest in the Khasis, and by the missionaries in the areas where they work. The sam, of which the Khasi Hills formed a part, has been for about the last ten years, there has been a growing feeling of in-group consciousness among the Khasis in the society of the Khasis, has been strengthened. These forces interact upon and stimulate each other. The Khasis too have increased. After Independence the Government adopted several measures for the welfare of tribal areas and tribal welfare; it has been realised that the Government cannot wear culture-blinders. Scheduled tribes are entitled to special benefits in the form of grants, reservation in services and legislative representation. This has made the tribal people more conscious of their identity which cuts across religion. Despite the awareness of and the attention to their culture, the trend of a large segment of the Khasis towards Christianity. It is an interesting fact that since Independence, the number of converts to Christianity in the Khasi society too is more heterogeneous than before. There is a higher frequency of inter-ethnic marriages between the tribal society as 'a homogeneous society' and the people participate in the common life in the same way.³⁸ The Khasi society now is in a state which is not as homogeneous in composition, segmented as in the early days. Earlier, the feeling of unity among various hill tribes which helped them to get

J.H. Morris, *The History of Our Foreign Missions*,
ibid., pp. 26-27.

ibid., p. 27.

J. Nongphura, No. 20, (1904) p. 84.

Referring to or addressing a person as the 'father' is common among the early Khasis and this still persists in interior rural areas.

She belonged to the *Phira* Kur but adopted the *Phan* clan. Later, she married a person from Orissa and became a Mahanti.

J.H. Morris, *op. cit.*, p. 33.

H. Bareh, *op. cit.*, p. 471.

H. Bareh, *A Short History of Khasi Literature*, (1967) p. 1.

J.H. Morris, *op. cit.*, (1930) p. 31-32.

ibid., p. 40.

ibid.

N.K. Syamchaudhari, 'Anthropology and the tribal region: A Common Perspective for North-East India' (1967) p. 1.

C. Nakane, *Khasi and Garo: A Comparative Study of Social Systems*, (Paris) (1967) p. 97.

H. Bareh, *The History and Culture of the Khasi People*, (1967) p. 1.

P.R.T. Gurdon, *The Khasis*, (1914) p. 6.

H. Bareh, *op. cit.*, (1967) p. 30.

J. Khasi Mynta, No. 15. *Risaw* 1, 1897.

P.R.T. Gurdon, *op. cit.*, p. 32.

Jeng Khasi, *Essays on Khasi Heritage*, (Shillong) (1967) p. 1.

The Khasis called the deities *Bishwakarma*, *Synshar*, *Shing*, *Shing*, *Shing*.

Moni Nag, "Effects of Christianity on some aspects of Khasi culture," Anthropological Assoc. 66 Annual Meet—(Washington) (1967) p. 1.

P.R.T. Gurdon *op. cit.*, (1914) p. 6.

D.N. Majumdar, *Races and Cultures of India*, (1957) p. vii.

Nirmal Kumar Bose, *Cultural Anthropology*, (1953) p. 1.

ibid., p. 46.

Group study by Bareh, Pakyntein and six others (1965) p. 48.

N.K. Bose *op. cit.* p. 58.

C.L. Rema, *A Common Perspective for North-East India*, (1967) p. 209.

6

Present Khasi Society

With the arrival of the missionaries, a new era in Khasi society. In the still waters, ripples began to appear. Changes in Khasi society on account of missionary influence are subcultural in nature. Other significant happenings include the transfer of political power in 1947 when India became an independent nation, the Khasi Hills springing into strategic importance, increasing urbanisation, the growth of mass media of communication, and a boost in the economy. Owing to these, the presence of a new dynamism and a greater horizontal and vertical mobility. As a result, a chain of social reactions was generated. The emergence of a secular nation and a welfare State, the strengthening and articulate direction. Governmental and voluntary organisations took on increasingly the work done earlier by the missionaries. Local people were increasingly drawn into the spheres of activities of foreign agencies. It would thus be relevant to identify the present Khasi society and its possible direction.

The earlier near-static Khasi society underwent a transformation that began invisibly around the year 1813 A.D. The cultural persistence associated with isolationism was gradually eroded. Basically, the matri-centred Khasi society was transformed. Before. There were other minor, yet significant changes in culture and civilisation that affected the Khasi

l superstructure. Influx of outsiders in large-scale ethnic marriages have added a further dimension to the changes were pointers to a new direction. It is in such an area where an area becomes the melting-pot of different cultures, the main points to be taken into account are the content of culture, the central theme and the economic frame work that sustains them.

The Khasi character has not altered significantly. The Khasis are reluctant to move out, although on a larger scale than before. The Khasi is deeply attached to his land and also to his kin. Experience of strangers and the fact that he belongs to a minority have further aroused his self-consciousness. A Khasi is also too independent to be easily influenced; he will not obey readily. For all his openness, perhaps, he prefers his own surroundings. Though generous and hospitable, a Khasi still shies from strangers. In villages, men and women respond warily when they see a strange face, but they are cautious and not hostile. Once convinced of the good intentions of the stranger, they are friendly and hospitable. Perhaps, as many have pointed out, the prejudice made also by Roy-Burman and others, that the Khasi is a thief in their minds is associated with the experience of a trader with whom their experiences were not pleasant.

The change taking place in the present Khasi society is being initiated by foreign missionaries who have come here and all for their pioneer, organised and systematic work for the betterment of Khasis, is not only rapid but also deep. Only 35% of the Khasis; the rest are still in the state of lack of education, hygiene, literacy, and so on. With more non-Khasis in the Hills the change in the composition of Khasi society (Jaintia) is treated in a reserved manner, but in the Khasi society. A non-Khasi marrying a Khasi woman and adopting Khasi ways of life, is, as in the early days, accepted as a Khasi. The children too get their full status as Khasis. Judgment to this effect was given in the Assam 128 (Assam 128) in the case of a person of American mother and a Khasi Father.¹ In the

them to enter another domain.

The broad division of the present Khasis is into two sections—the educated town-dweller and the illiterate. The former show preference for white-collar jobs such as law, medicine and engineering, and commerce. Among the latter, although the dignified and respected, there, are practically no Khasi gardeners, barbers, sweepers, soldiers and male domestic help. The percentage of literacy is high, the benefits of education have not reached well into the interior. The Khasi culture is not as yet very advanced and the contribution in science, music, art, dance or drama has not been very significant. A new awareness or longing for improvement is spreading in the villages, especially in those which have grown into towns, or those whose inhabitants have had opportunities to visit other places and imbibe new and progressive ideas. Educated and salaried classes set up their own households, a man and wife, run and manage their own families and educate their children. To that extent, the attitude has changed as the maternal uncle in his brother's or sister's house is diminishing. The modern modes of living and working are being accepted. A man and his wife should live by themselves. Salaried people find that a man and his wife can better educate their children better if there is no interference from other relatives.

Men and women leave their hearth in search of new homes and start their own families. They live together and their children inherit their property. With education, the opening up of the country, the economic communication, and the way of life which has to meet the demands of the modern age, have helped the Khasis to accept and assimilate many changes. The dilemma the Khasi tribal is faced at present is to retain his identity and yet to keep pace with other advanced parts of the country, a dilemma stressed by Mahatma Gandhi as one which all tribals face. Truly, the Khasis will be drawn into the strong current of cultural change and of a general technical advance that is sweeping over the whole country. Their earlier leisurely ways of life

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ed and they must attune themselves to the new standards. In the case of the Khasi too tribes, the gap that separates them from sophisticated countrymen, particularly the urban, is to have narrowed. On the other hand the Khasis, who are mostly products of institutions, are of superior calibre and can hold their own with the intelligentsia of other states. There are individuals with exceptional mental and physical abilities and potential for leadership even at the national level. But the varied religious sects made inroads on the unity and the Khasis came to be divided with little communication amongst themselves. But the coming of these sects has improved and a new awareness, of belonging to the same stock, has led to a new outlook, which however, has yet to fully come to fruition.

Family

The present Khasi family is still matri-centric. A new dimension has been added to the earlier structure, particularly of the educated and economically independent men. This is all the more apparent in areas near urbanised areas, and in places with market facilities in the vicinity. A majority of the informants felt that the status bestowed further status on a woman, a feeling that their status remains as before; a minority felt that their status *de facto* has lessened and the status gained in importance. Education generates economic independence; economic independence bestows financial freedom. For all these reasons, a man also does not like to depend on his wife's relatives or from his mother.

One informant gave an example to prove his point. The status of women is more or less on par with that of men. It is said that women are respected but not given the same status as men in early days. A man may now take decisions without consulting his wife and mother, which earlier perhaps he could not. Another informant from *Shella* expressed that men are still respected greatly and that the status of women is enhanced. Most women now-a-days do not return before starting a meal. A convert *Khasi*

daughter) or one living in an urban area finds herself adversely affected as she is no longer the head of the family. In an orthodox Khasi family, a convert does not lose her right to property as before, but so does her position in the family. A situation contrary to the case of the *Khadduh* (orthodox or Christian) in urban areas and voluntarily refused to fulfil her social obligations. The members of the family do not come to her when in distress. While no uniformity exists in this regard in the fabric of Khasi society, it is generally true that in *Khyrim* and *Cherra* areas, nevertheless, the *Khadduh* has greatly retained her traditional position. In these areas, in most cases, the *Khadduh* gets the lion's share of property or at least, the lion's share. For, the concept of justice propagated here is based on the concept of justice propagated here where all children are treated in a fair manner. Property is shared equally between sons and daughters, and in the case of sons, property is also shared with daughters. In most rural orthodox families, earlier customs are followed and more traditional position of a woman is as before. But a new woman to assert herself in every sphere is evincing a new status the *inter se* status of men and women is now on a par.

Parental authority among the Khasis has changed considerably in urban surroundings and in rural families where parents are either too dominant or have no time for their children. The men work during the day and spend the evening hours in gambling or drinking. Life poses new problems for the younger generation. Individuals learn patterns of independence and autonomy from a very early age. Earlier, the family unit and played a crucial role in the life of the society was kin-oriented. But, the present pattern is different—the unit smaller and individual-oriented. There is also a change in the pattern of child-rearing. Individual child-care problems were negligible; an uncle or brother was always available to discipline the child who offended the local rules. But owing to changing living conditions and the smaller familial unit, intimacy among members leads to an intensification of conflict which may magnify and distort conflict and c

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quarrels and disagreements rather than act independently, and there is friction between the two generations is not enough there is no segregation of sexes in Khasi society is advocated. In actuality, however, society is permissive. Boys and girls mix freely and elopement to pregnancy outside wedlock has not decreased before.

A situation similar to Poland has arisen in Khasi family with the gradual weakening of the traditional family group (small and large family group). In Poland, the family goes to the fourth degree rather than the nuclear family. The land on which the peasants worked. The family was closely linked to other such groups to which authority was in the hands of the older members respected by all. Interests centred round the family interacting socio-economic group in which an individual was born. In the city, the wife has taken the role of the house-keeper, leaving the role of the father of the family. Paternalism, which was common to the Poles, rapidly declined as the children became more and more aware of their new freedom. When she started earning, she became increasingly independent. Hence, the transition has not always been as successful as just described.² Not seldom did the immigrant salary of the unskilled immigrant force them into heavy debts, to rely on charity and to have recourse to drink.

The budget of the average family shows that they spend more than before on food, housing and clothing. The price index gone up but the standard of living has not. This is more marked in urban areas. Entertainment has increased, further, and among some Khasis, education is next to food. Entertainment such as visiting clubs, shops, cinema-houses, going out for picnics, etc., on a larger scale than before. Savings have decreased. Little money is spent on marriages or for charity because people cannot have belief in the former has declined. But, a small amount is donated to the Church and some

unfortunate. Owing to the spiral rise in the cost of living, the poor can spend on luxuries. As between the orthodox Khasis, the former spends more on luxuries and the latter is more frugal, saving and investing in such solid items.

A definite trend indicating preference for patriarchy is noticeable among some segments of Khasi society. Views were expressed by the informants: (i) Khasi society is backward (ii) Khasi society is different from the rest of the nation it would be better if all societies were like Khasi. Then, the law could be uniformly applied. (iii) A majority of the informants said that the matrilineal system is a unique feature of Khasi society. In Shillong, there was a move to make Khasi society patrilineal, but a move failed. This was said to be not in the best interest as it was motivated politically. In Jorhat, such a resolution was put before the Khasi Association a few years ago. But, the motion was rejected. Making Khasi society patrilineal was not in the best interest. When women stand to gain thereby (as in the case of property) they express approval. This is more so among educated and non-Khasi women, who by adopting a Khasi husband stand to gain as a Khasi³ (iv) The informants said that they were too humble to express their views; whether a society was patri-centred or matri-centred mattered little to them.

Earlier, women did not participate even in the village *durbars* (family assemblies). But, it has been meeting that women can attend the village *durbars* in few villages. In Shillong, women insist on attending the assemblies to discuss matters of common interest. They are keen to participate in politics. During my visit to the village of Mavis Dunne, they were planning to place before the *durbars* a resolution protesting against the sect that although the *durbars* are *strong* (tax) for water supply thrice, the scheme has not been implemented. In yet other villages, viz. Laitumkroh, women are permitted to attend village *durbars* but they do not participate in its proceedings. In the Khasi village of Mavis Dunne, Mavis Dunne was a Lady Minister. She was one of the five and prominent members of the Khasi Association.

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ver, there are no Khasi women in the M
Assembly.

n the *ing* (family) too, many women hav
A 65 year old orthodox Khasi informa
that his own wife became a Christian when
nine years ago. Neither her family nor h
ht that if the religion made her happy, le
on, he permitted her to bring up the chil
felt that as the mother, she knew what w
en.

Today, there are no legal or social fetters
ared to the percentage of women outside,
do not take to professions on a large sca
en that an educated and urban girl alm
spise village life and finds a town job or c
age so as not to have to return to the vil
es, there are women teachers, women
rs and women bus-owners. But as the maj
poor, unskilled professions such as
ng, daily labour, selling of betel leaf and
ng in small shops, etc., are very common.
and vegetable vendors too.

n urban areas and in villages located ne
, families are smaller than before. They
rn of nuclear families in patriarchal a
ial unit (*Kpoh*) had been the predomina
But now the Khasis show greater pr
ar type of families. A man with an ind
greater voice in matters pertaining to his
In a sense, the trend is good, for one
e-centred type of social organisation of
it tended to weaken the sense of resp
rity of men. Nevertheless, many families
ies anywhere in the world. A higher fr
c marriages has given a new complexion t
ease in the birth-rate and decrease in the d
arger population, leading to congestion i
on is greater. And yet, forming the ba
ty, whether rich or poor, urban or ru
wise, there are many families where chi

th a healthy respect for both parents. The pattern of a Khasi family will tend towards a smaller nuclear unit under increasing economic pressure and freedom in a modernising and urbanising society. To this ancestor-worship, shared family responsibility, family head, the *Khadduh*, etc., which are all further weakened.

Marriages

In the early days, marriage was regarded both as a spiritual and a socio-economic partnership. The woman was to strengthen the ties of kinship. Marriages were by courtship and also by arrangement. The stress is on the former. There are, however, some marriages where parental consent is not obtained but formal ceremonies are fewer. Except in the past there is a rise in the marriageable age. The age for marriage was always higher than in the Jaintia Hills, this age is now lower by an average of 10 years. Today, the frequency of Khasi non-Khasi marriages is more than before and the range of non-Khasi marriages in which the inter-ethnic marriages take place is widening. There is a slight tilt in the orientation of inter-ethnic marriages. It was always towards the Khasi community. Non-Khasi men brought outsiders to their own land; they did not bring Khasi women.

Now some of them, both men and women, are adopting some non-Khasi ways. As before, when a non-Khasi man adopted Khasi ways, he is accepted as a Khasi. No special ceremony is required for this purpose. Correspondingly, the number of inter-ethnic marriages has increased. These trends were exacerbated during World War II. During this time the environments enjoyed economic prosperity and a large number of foreigners came here.

Divorces, concubinage and promiscuity are on the rise among all sections of the Khasis. The traditional healthier relationship between the husband and wife is breaking down. The sanctified marriage among Christian couples is also breaking down. In predominantly Christian areas, divorces are now being performed in the presence of senior

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unity, preferably when the *Ksiangs* (sp
age ceremony are present.

Marriage ceremonies too are simpler and
ects of Khasis is broader. At times, custo
may be followed. There is no uniform
my is still sacrosanct. A couple violating
outcaste and is not entitled to proper fu
wise the treatment meted out to such co
man as before. The hardships of ex-com
n society have lessened considerably.

at present, Khasi law is more permiss
er delay in the administration of justice.
expensive. As a consequence, the deterren
ncidence of crime is on the increase. E
eggars or vagrants (*Nongkhrongs*) in the
umber is more but most of these are non-
Very few cases regarding property went
was considered a slur on the family. But,
property have increased. Independen
ged the picture. Every family has now
wing property. Christian parents make
healthy, sophisticated orthodox Khasis, the
ake wills too. Khasi courts have follow
m-conversion and inter-ethnic marriages
patterns in law and today, neither is a b
achelor's earnings can be disposed of accor
ese new tendencies persist, and are develo
m, they will be incorporated in Khasi law
Khasis earlier had a high sense of obse
r and the severity of punishment in some c
ern people. But, its effect was deterre
l forms of punishment are not as severe as
Christianity had no direct impact on
ded by law but it has preached temperar
British administration that a uniform law
(the Criminal Procedure Code) has been t
the wishes of the local people. The m
nistering law in the State is a three-tier

bly, the Syiems' assembly and the District
es the Government established courts.

erty

The concept of property has not changed
erty (as against clan property) has acquired
because of changing times and urbanisation
ven today, except for house-rites, the
ltural land in the Khasi Hills, as in
of the north-east India remains the property
y or clans and not of individuals. However
use-rites are allotted to individuals or families
contrast to the land revenue systems pre-
of the nation where land is well demarcated
ver land is recognised. A move is afoot
Reforms Commission, constituted by the
alaya, to restructure the land revenue system
so that land could be surveyed properly
records developed.

s

The urban influence on the dress worn
ed. Most villagers now wear trousers and
. The well-to-do ones wear jackets in
e the age-group of 65 wear gold rings round
en now wear tailored clothes inside, either
blouses made by machine-woven material
hankies and shawls and wear shoes and
arked in the *Bhoi* and *Lyngnam* areas
er. Most children dress in the western fashion
y girls around the age-group of six to ten
Khasi dress.

Basically, the diet of the Khasis has remained
ne addition of salt, milk and eggs. The eating
dian or western dishes. Chinese food is
g the Khasis. Betel nut and leaf are liked
he elite consider such a habit unsophisticated

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Khasis even now do not normally eat sweets.

Education

Khasis have gained by education, sciences, and improved sanitary methods. Unimproved even in villages and good effects of sanitation and knowledge are apparent in the increase of life expectancy, the decrease in the death-rate of children, and old age mortality. Christian education has opened the promise of many openings of position for the Khasis a great deal. But, facilities are not commensurate to the demands. An increasing desire for education is noticeable among many sections of the Khasi community who are acquainted with the benefits of education. There is a change in the approach to problems such as health, sanitation and the like. Even in interior areas such as *Sohbarpunji* there are additional schools for girls and boys on a co-educational basis.

Literature

As in many Christian communities, so in the Khasi literature was born at the initiative and under the patronage of the Church. In 1969, a leading Khasi literary critic observed that the two factors indicating an awareness of literature, viz., love of literature and love of the past, are to be found among the educated Khasis. The Khasi elite have an intense desire for a rich literary tradition, a deep pride regarding the past. There is a growing awareness, as is reflected in their up-to-date literary production, and is also for the Khasi literature to be a medium of expression of ideas and thoughts from within the Khasi community.

Music, Dance and Song

In the last century, the Welsh Missionaries introduced singing in singing on Solfa notations while the school run by the Catholics produced a number of musicians and pipers who play on staff notation. The style of the Khasi folk-songs (mythological

e), and community singing is still heard. National songs and Rabindra Sangeet, and so popular. Gramophone records, radios delight grown-ups and children alike as the new class of modern Khasi songs blending the harmony of western pop music is gaining in the towns. The music is also tied to the hymn or the cinema hit.

Both Indian and western dancing are liked. The predominant preference among the youth is for dancing, jam-sessions and other modern types. There was no solo dancing among the Khasis. Dancing of Bengal and Assam are known and liked. Khasi communal and festive dances like *Jhum* and warrior-dance, annual features of which have declined in practice, have been revived by the missionaries. *Pomblang*, festival of goat sacrifice, also *Jhum* dance still continues. The Christians do not help in these festivities whereas, initially, they helped in them or witness them. And, in Aizawl, for Christmas among the Catholics include dancing.

Recreation and Games

Hunting is not very popular now-a-days. *Aizawl* are still in vogue. Rural folk play various games viz., carrom, cards, football, hockey, cricket, tennis, table-tennis and badminton. Popular among children are: playing seesaw on the trunk of trees, a game played by making holes in moving stones in it which is common in the hills, and playing with balls. A favourite sport among the upper classes is riding downhill in crude hand-made sleds fitted with wheels which are also used for transport. High society games like golf are popular in the upper sections in Shillong. The cinema provides entertainment to all Khasis. Shadow plays and drama are popular, particularly betting on archery, is also popular.

enclature

The Khasis still attach more importance to a good name than to its meaning—Chandro is modified to Shandro Mohan. A Catholic priest encouraged the use of Khasi names, but as Christian influence is strong, the earlier Khasi names are broken down. There is a trend to choose, for baptisms, Western names. I met a young girl named 'Parliament' and 'Seminar'; other catchy western names are 'Antwel', 'Morningstar', etc. The educated Khasi has adopted the pan-Indian and Western practice of adding the surname of her husband to her personal name. But amongst many Khasis, the old custom of everyone being known by his or her own name and the name of the first child. Then, for all practical purposes, the mother is known as 'Mother of Raju' or 'Father of Darisa Simon' as the case may be. A recent noticeable trend amongst educated Khasi Christians is the insistence on using the clan name of the maternal side. In official documents, the names are not used in everyday life and are rarely used in school registers, census forms and election lists. In a sophisticated Christian family, the mother and father are addressed as *kinie* and *u Kpa*. Brothers, sisters and children are addressed by name.

ages

There are at present 1,839 inhabited villages in the Khasi hills. The settlement pattern of some of the villages has changed. New villages have sprung up near areas that have gained otherwise in importance. Some of the older villages have expanded in size and are now giving the semblance of a much larger village. The interior are hardly affected. In most villages, small shops and tailor shops have sprung anew. The larger, markedly Christian ones, and those with a large population, have schools and cultural centres. Hillside villages have markets too. In the early days when families shifted to new locations, the pattern of households sprang up. These were loosely connected by economic and social ties and owed allegiance to the head of the household.

man. The scene has now been altered, so

The village is not as cohesive a unit as in the past. The area of a medium sized village is about 1000 acres. Villages nearer to industries and towns have changed more. Despite the forces of change and their effects on the economy, the outlook of the village remains largely the same; however, individualistic and separatist forces are at work. But for village backward villages, most villages have changed; the village is no longer a strong primary community and family revolve. Near *Cherapunji* ignorant to such a degree that they were not aware of the national anthem. In another village in *Lyngdoo* did not know the colours of the national flag. This may be true of other backward areas in the hills also. The gulf between the believers of the villages is wider than in the urban areas.

Living and Architecture

Urbanisation has led to greater mobility and living have changed both in villages and towns. Living in towns is distinctly non-Khasi and non-Jaintia. In villages, the huts are simpler. But, wealthier people build permanent structures. Villages and houses formerly considered lucky. The superstitions that a house should be built in a triangular spot, *dur khoh*, with a tree in front is in vogue but on a far smaller scale. The custom of *Ing* during which an animal was sacrificed before occupying a house is no longer observed. Instead, there is a type of house built in the western pattern.

Economy

The primary occupation of the majority of the population has remained the same, viz., cultivation. The economy has undergone rapid changes in several other respects. There has been a spurt in the economy; there are increasing numbers of secondary sources of income, cultivation of cash crops is undertaken on a larger scale. Cash crops like rubber, selling of betel leaf and nut are also

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shops have also sprung up. Even semi-skilled persons have found new economic opportunities. Increasing urbanisation and a town in the hilly forests are disappearing as trees are felled. New roads are coming up in urban areas and areas surrounding them. The availability of faster communication has brought about mobility and independence. The older generation used to travel long distances on foot but, the younger generation has come to avail of transport facilities even for short distances. Towns have brought villages into close touch with the world of new articles of consumption. *Biris* (tobacco) and cigarettes are sold at every corner of any village. The expansion of towns has created better markets for agricultural commodities. But, with the emergence of income, the avenues of expenditure have also increased. However, since available surplus of investment has not increased proportionately, the village economy shows only moderate signs of growth.

Changes in occupational structure have not brought about radical changes in the earlier traditional occupations of the Khasi tribal society. The majority of villages are still economically backward and as such, not much interest is shown in children's education. As such, they may not be able to avail of employment opportunities, especially in the near future. Gifts of nature are still the backbone of the economic life of the hill people. Human labour is still abundant in the hilly land with low fertility forms the main economic resources of the village. Most villages are still within their traditional boundaries. Among the Khasis, land utilisation is still the same. People are showing increasing interest in stock and poultry (meat and dairy animals). Even the chief's own land and property, he has no special status. The land is by virtue of being a chief. Government has initiated many schemes in this field which were initially discouraged by the missionaries.

Changes observed during the years 1947-50 have been significant. The farmers have begun to present their demands to the Government and avail of Government advice and assistance. Missionaries qualified in agriculture put across new agricultural practices. During the 10 years following Independence

of potato, kosohsin (*Colocasis exculen*) and among the villagers by the Government as a cash-crop. The Department of Agriculture and sanctions grants to construct rice granaries to store rain water. Many Khasis have now moved from single-cropping to multi-cropping in the uplands also. Use of fertilisers, manures and insecticides has increased. In the flattish valleys in which the rice is grown in terraced and well-irrigated fields, the rice is grown on the northern border of the district wherever the level surface admits of them. With this exception, most of the crops like unirrigated rice, pulses and the like are grown on the hill-sides by the slash-and-burn method which is still popular, especially in the Uplands. However terrace cultivation is increasingly adopted.

The Khasis are, comparatively, backward in the accepted indicators of economic development. More people living below the poverty line in Meghalaya compared to other States. In 1969-70 the per capita income in Meghalaya was Rs 327, one of the lowest in the country. To ensure a reasonable standard above the poverty line, per capita income should be at least Rs 480. The per capita income in Meghalaya are higher than the all-India average (1969), due to higher transport costs and value added. The industrial backwardness of the Khasis is due to the fact that except for the *Cherrapunjee* jute mill, there is no industry worth the name. However, the Government is planning ambitious projects in this sphere of small-scale industries.

To the early Khasi villagers, mountains were the source of life in their marginal economic life. From the mountains came firewood (grass and twigs, pine cones), food (mushrooms), medicine (from traditional herbs) and honey. From the streams came fish and in the hills they went to hunt for food. In the present village economy, cash is required for the meagre necessities of life and these are more than before, especially in the different urban environment today. Cash is required for the daily necessities of life.

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is primarily agricultural and the growth of industries in urban and other areas has partly met the need for cash.

One factor affecting the Khasi industrial development is the retention of in-group consciousness. A Khasi resident prefers to work not only in the hills but in his own surroundings. Hardly 2,000 Khasis are employed in the Khasi Hills. At times, the new training facilities acquired, do not have scope in their former use, especially in small Khasi villages. So they have to look for their livelihood. New small-scale industries multiplying fast are carpentry, printing, book-binding, house-building, etc. Other mushrooming industries are bet-weaving and mat-weaving. Recently, the Government announced that two industries would be set up in the War area—essential oils (extracted from betel leaves) and preservation (of oranges and pineapples). Government is encouraging spinning, weaving and sericulture in the hill areas with large forests are very suitable for such work. But in many villages, especially in the Jaintia areas, there is no pronounced desire for change in the pattern of living; this will perhaps, be met by better education.

Examination of the standard of food, clothing and other consumer goods used by the people indicates a change in the plane of living of the majority of the population over the last 25 years or so. But, this is not the case in the case of Christians and those who have embraced Christianity among the rest of the Khasis. The Government has facilitated the expansion of cultivation of cash crops which has increased the sources of income which has improved the standard of living. Income from forest products such as selagin, etc., has also increased greatly. Employment of casual labour on a daily and monthly basis has increased a greater importance as secondary source of income. The economy is still essentially traditional, but changes in recent years can be easily noticed. The urban market has affected villagers to a small extent but any improvement in the traditional handicrafts has not been a significant break-through in the agricultural sector.

possible. One change of considerable significance is the transformation of the village economy from a self-sufficient one to a progressive and

There is considerable decline in fishing and indiscriminate felling of forests.

While on the average, the Christian Khasis are financially more stable than the orthodox or Hinduised Khasis. It seems to be financially more stable than the orthodox Khasis as more by way of gold, land, house, etc. It has an appearance that gives the impression of wealth; he spends more as well

Political Set-up

The majority of the political leaders in the Khasi and Jaintia hills are products of missionary education, both Christian and Hindu. The leadership is of a superior calibre, a type highly respected by the people. The Legislative Assembly of the State is still in an infant stage. A District Council seems to be necessary in the development of Meghalaya.

In the wake of Independence, autonomous councils were set up under Schedule VI of the Constitution. The Native States system and the chiefdom system, under the sufferance of the District Council, have been abolished. Hence the District Council finds it difficult to maintain a status which is neither offensive to regional aspirations nor the blue-print of an ill-fitting all-India scheme. The Khasis are of the opinion, that since Meghalaya is now a part of India and as the District Council was meant to be a measure of autonomy and self-rule under the supervision of Assam, a change in the political set-up is necessary. The Khasis gained much political independence from the minimum British administration of the area. They won a point in that the rights, privileges and interests of the area have now been embodied in many orders, regulations and enquiries which lend themselves to the Khasis desire that progress must be based on the wishes of the people. This is the outstanding demand for a Khasi democracy, a highly practical democ

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tive world, based on a sober and legitimate concept of general will.⁵

Most of the Christian informants examined the political system through the District Council satisfactorily, though some overhauled the District Council was pragmatic, served the people adequately and was not fossilised in approach to account the complex nature of present conditions into reality the political needs and aspirations. It represented all sections of Khasi society and dissensions between Christians and non-Christians. The Council has not brought about many important changes required urgently. But it has inspired confidence in the people and amendments to the Khasi law necessary for the next stage of Khasi society without alteration. As it consists of Khasis, it can function well within the State of Meghalaya, a society consisting of Khasis, Garos and Jaintias. But a few informants, among them Christians, felt that the District Council was not concerned with the larger interests of the people. They were only interested in continuing to their self-aggrandisement and avoided solving real problems of the people. There is also a growing feeling among many informants, whether after a full-fledged Meghalaya has come into being, a middle tier of administration like the District Councils, will at all be designed in the context of the earlier council system consisting of hill and plains people. The role of District Councils will therefore require further discussion and debate in the Khasi society of Meghalaya for some time to come.

As stated earlier, the District Council has no traditional political functionaries such as *syiems*. The role of *syiems* in the changing political system and place in a democratic set-up, many informants felt the presence of *syiems* is an anachronism and therefore not required. The *syiems* had no political functions in a democracy. A minority of orthodox Khasis

the divine in origin and represented the earlier
 ns of Khasis and so should continue to exist.
 My informants agreed that Khasi women have
 status today. However, the number of
 ing to politics was small.

Politically, the Khasi Hills, like most pa
 th-east region of the country, is in a state of
 map of this area has been redrawn only
 tical institutions have grown in small areas,
 ed by a handful of district level officials. It
 e before the new found political freedom is
 ople and for traditions to establish themselves
 n to stabilise.

Religious Attitudes

The tendency among all sects of the Khasis
 wn to the core of the religion and understa
 nder of the Khasi *Niam*, Christianity
 nduism. Outward expressions such as rituals
 superficial and superfluous and much lesser i
 these. The performance of some rituals and
 divination, etc., by some affluent Khasis can
 attempt to find the way back to God. Lik
 kkim, the Khasis still believe in a Supre
 ities of the grove, cave and stream. Howe
 ucated, the urbanites and most Christians,
 clined considerably.

The recent trend is that religion is not to
 a belief, unchanging and settled, becaus
 currences believed to have taken place at on
 ust be seen as a relation of man to God ba
 rary knowledge and tempered with reason
 owing that religion alone guides humanity to
 goodness and is a benevolent philosophy
 ion. It is also realised that the basic princip
 e the same. Belief in monotheism has thus g
 tions of Khasis'. The trend is therefore to
 d brotherhood of man as taught by the Un
 makrishna Mission. Such beliefs prevail ar
 nger Khasis and among the broad-minded

ther tendency is to judge religious ideals in terms of practicability and reasoning; the emphasis is on sanction or theory. Further, material needs are temporal ideals. The religious life of all sects is becoming simpler and austere.

There is now more rapport among the different sects and between Christians and the others as has been noted earlier, one reason for uniting the Christian sects is the earlier discovery of the Government to the work of foreign missionaries and movements and funds, etc. were controlled, thus found their sources of funds getting dried up. Added to this is the revival of ancient socio-religious nature. The need to meet a major cause for closing of ranks among the sects. Inter-sect rivalry and attacks on one another have now given place to more rapport. A crisis such as the need to provide succour to refugees from Bangladesh during 1971.

There is also increasing rapport between the orthodox Khasis. Both sections have moved away from their rigid positions and towards each other. Things nowadays refer to the common code of conduct, the orthodox realise the logic in the things. This is contrary to the attitude of the past when Christianity was considered an alien religion, often, propagating it meant preaching to the heathens. It is now argued. If Plato and Aristotle were Christianised, why not Khasi *Niam* too? In a Christmas message a couple of years ago, the non-Christians too should be looked upon. Prayers offered for them. This is taken as a departure from earlier attitudes that salvation was for Christians only. Such a change in attitude is noticeable. As has been noted, Christians, who were not allowed to witness socio-religious functions like the traditional dances of the orthodox Khasis, are not now so prohibited. Christians not only witness but also assist. The use of musical instruments is now allowed in churches. Many Christian priests not only refer to

aspects of Khasi *Niam*. Negative criticism of it has also decreased. The orthodox Khasis too have shown religious tolerance and appreciate the humanitarianism and the human approach of the missionaries. It is felt that certain taboos that hold back modernisation should be dropped. The taboo against the use of electricity and the laying down of pipelines for water supply have been relaxed. It has also been realised that strict observance of certain items of food will deprive children of their right of nourishment.

Certain matters evoke uniform reactions. The rejection of religious persuasions, object to them on religious and other grounds. The arguments in favour of them conducive to better health have been accepted. Land has increased, land is available in plenty. In this respect, Khasis are in a minority; and so, their religious planning justified.

Reflecting the classical dichotomy between tribal religions, a distinction has recently been made between tribal religions (in which participation is restricted to a specific group) and universal religion (which is independent of any specific social group or tribe). According to this criterion, the Khasi Unitarianism, influenced by the Rama Krishna Mission belongs to the latter sects. They respect every religion. As Hinduism, many Christians see their own supernatural and their own theology as the only true one. But they are in essence intolerant of other views. This is a western tendency, specially in American Christianity. As Norbeck points out, 'ideas which one feels strongly or desires intensely'. Among Asian Christians, the situation is somewhat different. Christians in Asia also participate in ancestral worship, go to temples or shrines, consult astrologers, perform wedding ceremonies (Christian and non-Christian). They perform two contrasting funeral rites (to make the soul happy). But in the Khasi society, where Christians have given up earlier religious practices, ancestral practices have been retained. In time

tians resort to traditional divinatory
assessment ceremonies.

The change in attitude and tolerance am
of the Khasis is however a healthy trend
ground for the all round development o
ess should be smoother in view of the inh
Khasis themselves. For, as Pandit Nehru r
tribal people are much more disciplined
most other people in India. From the rel
trends are in consonance with the up
ing in most of the progressive nations o
now think in terms of universal brother
ul religion. The effort of every section o
ty is for a greater dialogue amongst
een the Khasis and the non-Khasis too.
n sum, the present trends in Khasis soci
transformation which began imperceptibl
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re later super-imposed by a tendency to
(Illus. 13). The pro-Christian trend st
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e Khasi society is in the direction of
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among the Christians, the Protestants, an
ntrast to non-Christians, are more adv
ally an air of superiority and self-confiden
sitions of power or authority and a high r
lite are Christians. This has given rise
bism in politics and other spheres with C
persons of their own faith and is felt to
more towards Christians than others. Th
morandum submitted to the Government
he orthodox Khasis, in particular, have b
st. This kind of a phenomenon is witne
also and goes under the name of cast
istic politics.

Changes in Proselytisation

Christianity is a potent factor that has brought about some changes in the culture and structure of societies in north-west India, as it has done elsewhere. The hill tribal population is predominant in the north-eastern region of India, as is indicated by the following table:

<i>Name of tribe</i>	<i>Percentage of total population</i>
Mizos	100
Nagas	50
Khasis	60

More than ten per cent of the Khasi population live in hilly areas. The Christian missionaries did not interfere with the social structure of Khasi society, but they changed the ideology of the Khasis. Where they did not interfere, it is seen that Christianity received a setback because of the arrangement of intra-clan marriages.

Christianity is growing in strength among the Khasis since the advent of Independence and the gradual withdrawal of foreign missionaries from the scene. Relevant statistics have been cited in Chapters I and V (See also Appendix I). A re-examination of these figures once again will bring out the actual trend towards proselytisation.

The total population of the United Khasi Hills in 1971 was 491,209, of which the population of the Khasi Hills has been estimated to be 3,52,000 (figure given by the Census authorities, till the time of writing). There has been an increase of about 29% over the figures of 1961. The population alone over a decade is more than the increase in the order as the growth of the total population (including the number of non-Khasis) in the Khasi Hills. However, the total Christian population in the Khasi Hills which was stated to be 144,879 in 1961 has increased to 248,000 in 1971. The Census data and preliminary notes have not been released yet. The Christian population in the Khasi Hills was estimated by the Census authorities and informally from some sources close to the authorities. It is hence difficult to say definitely the Christian population in the Khasi Hills region.

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proximately 71% during the 1961-1971 decade. All-India average growth of Christians during the same period was only 32.60% and the total population increase was only 29.30%. If the figures cited are correct, they include Christian population in the near vicinity of the area which was part of the Khasi and Jaintia Hills. The Census of 1971, they obviously indicate a sharp increase in conversions to Christianity during the decade. At least the figure of 248,000 Christians in the area is obtained unofficially from the Census sources. The number of followers claimed by different Christian denominations at the beginning of the year 1973 was 212,000. The main reason for the discrepancy could be due to the inclusion of a large number of Jaintias, Garos and others who live in the Khasi Hills. It is not certain whether the figure of 212,000 as gathered from various Churches includes all or any of the ethnic groups mentioned above. It does not include them and represents only the Khasis. If 60% of the Khasis are Christians, a significant increase from the 1961 figure of 45%. This jump again is based on information gathered in the field and from the statements of important informants. If the figure of 212,000 is correct, at 25,000 other ethnic groups, then the percentage of Christians will drop down to 45%. The orthodox Khasis claim that not more than 45% of the Khasis are Christians whereas most Christians claim that 60% of the Khasi population.

While the figures discussed above indicate a definite growth in the population of Christians, it is below the average decade growth of population in the area. It is normal growth and addition by way of conversions have taken place during the decade. The extent of such conversions or reasons for conversions are not yet judged until the census data is properly analyzed. The Christian sect which is fast gaining in the Jaintia Hills is the Roman Catholic sect. Its growth is due to foreign missionaries working in the interior of the hills, rapidly expanding its activities in the field of social and religious work. This sect also attracts more Khasis to its fold due to the tolerance of certain features of Khasi life and customs.

far into the interior of backward areas and hilly areas, where other sects did not reach. Catholics also separate religious and social service, some Catholics do seek counsel for family planning; Catholic doctors cooperate in health programmes. This sect is better organised and has funds at its disposal than the other Christians who have to subsist only on locally raised resources. It is not to say that the Roman Catholic sect will not grow in strength in the future years to come even though it is handicapped in recruiting priests due to the shortage of vocations.

The majority of the elite in Khasi society are Christians in positions of power and authority in the Government. The Khasi Hills are also Christians. There is no doubt that the holders of authority go more to the Christian than to the traditional. One of the reasons for a higher rate of literacy is that, for the most part, most Christian sects provide for their members, in Government service or elsewhere, a means of livelihood. Arranging for their being invited to foreign countries like the USA, Canada or countries in Europe for technical courses or seminars.

During certain moments of stress, the people become suspicious about the role of missionaries, many of the difficulties to national integration were attributed to the missionaries. It is not unnatural for people to have certain suspicions about the roles of foreign missionaries. The association with foreign governments was one of the reasons for this. There is a continuous interaction between the Christian Church and local traditions in spiritual life and Christianity.

Criticism against Missionaries

The Constitution of India guarantees freedom of religion. So, to attack missionaries on the basis of religion is not fair. In the Khasi Hills, there is no doubt that the missionaries indulged in coercion, but apart from Proselytisation and humiliations, their sterling work has left a permanent mark which is appreciated by all. It is not correct to say

s of the spread of Christianity were introduced to a new religion or the form looked upon as a status symbol, mere fact that the new religion was the religion of was a deeper tie than what appeared in alone could explain cases such as those *riang* who prayed alone for seven years in a h till the Unitarian movement gained m is a new church there, a building capable ults on its benches and an indefinite num e floor. When Margaret Barr attended t 36, the place was nearly full. Why is it re and education schemes of Govern t personnel and financed liberally, oach the missionaries for a helping hand? te Indianisation, nationalisation and con e the indigenous Khasi culture, Christi gth? Contrary to some popular belief it i British administrators did not always agre ding the approach of the missionaries to v tribal people. And yet, the impact of Chri come to stay.

me

Khasi society is today in a state of flu in the process of assimilation and absorp trends and blending into its fabric cu l and political advancement of the rest of tting integrated in the mainstream. In -frogging' certain transitional stages of it is absorbing western ideas faster ever e in India, assisted ably by mass media lik zines. Dr Elwin remarked: 'It may we run all the tribes will lose their distinc a drab uniformity, possibly dominated by American civilization that is so rapidly world . . . many of the mbre sophisticated y all their culture and individuality bu n have retained a great deal that is good While the basic foundations of the Khasi

ss intact the superstructure is undergoing
 al changes caused by westernisation
 al of Khasi ancient culture, awareness
 s, a boost to the economy and a faster an
 e of life. The marked influence of Chris
 ng. Christians stand closely together
 e is a change, towards vocations, the pre
 -collar jobs. Women are taking increas
 professions outside the home, though no
 his role is no longer considered incompati
 erhood. Some cultural and civilisation
 d above are recent. The pattern of beha
 Khasi has not altered radically but a re-th
 cts is underway.

The work of the missionaries in the field o
 been taken over in a large measure by w
 Government and by work initiated by v
 es like the Red Cross, Rotary or the Lio
 come to acquire more and more political m
 and form an effective political group in th
 alaya. Still, a majority of the rural popul
 g of frustration and non-fulfilment, a feel
 e rural areas of the nation.

The following points emerge in this context

- 1) The Khasis have become increasingly
 need to play an active part in th
 particular, and in the life of the nation
- 2) There are two distinct groups among
 first, an orthodox group keen on rev
 culture, the second, a group of Christ
 are comparatively more westernise
 religious differences, however, the K
 closer than ever before.
- 3) Like the rest of the Indians, trying to
 fast developing technological and soc
 Khasis also manifest a sense of fear a
- 4) The important question that emerg
 future role to be played by the m
 Khasi Hills and as pointed out earlie
 be more and more confined to pr

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Church and proselytisation, the work being taken over by the other agencies.

The present Khasis are in a state of a transitional transition. Pluralism in the present is of a subdued nature. Hence, the social process is less complex than elsewhere nor are the nuances of the social basis is still predominantly ethnic. Following of the Khasi society towards a modern movement has not significantly affected

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Recently a Khasi lawyer, Thangkhiew, has taken a case on should get the property and the daughter the
This has sparked off a controversy; a prominent
worker said she did not understand this move for,
the name of the clan and the right to property go
A consumption level of Rs 40 per month has been
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7

Conclusion

It may be concluded that the Khasis living in the steep and rugged mountains of the Khasi Hills have undergone a spectacular transformation during the last century. From a primitive, superstition-ridden and economically backward people of the past, they have come a long way to the threshold of the modern age. They are today playing a vital role in the nation's destiny.

The early matri-centred Khasi society, composed of small village units, was highly egalitarian but it was isolated. Contact with other civilisations and religions like Hinduism and Islam, was insignificant and marginal. It was at the fringes of the sprawling Khasi Hills that the missionaries, based on their belief of being the chosen people, brought the influence of Christianity which began around the mid-19th century, to bring about a lasting change. The first efforts of the missionaries to preach Christianity among the Khasis were made in the mid-19th century. The Welsh Presbyterian Mission, established by design, considered the Khasi Hills a promising area for missionary work here in 1841, heralding the beginning of missionary activity in these hills to infuse new ideas and technological concepts.

The initial missionaries faced many hardships and difficulties that could have made a determined person withdraw disheartened. But they persevered with the local people and by persuasion

CONCLUSION

endous amount of zeal, devotion and persistence over. Emphasis was rightly placed on literacy through literacy and education. The Bible was recognised as a powerful media through which the Gospel could be spread. The Khasis were also attracted to the excellent health care and medical treatment available. In addition to conversions, there were other benefits available. Conversions to Christianity grew stage by stage. Christianity extended in gradual but substantial numbers throughout the Khasi Hills. New missions came, the Protestants and broke new grounds. The Catholics faced difficulties, including, as reported, stoning of missionaries and priests whom the Khasis initially refused to accept. Local sects of Christianity also grew. It has been pointed out that the contribution of Christian missionaries to the development of the Khasi is many and varied, both as a direct result of their work and due to far-reaching spread-effects. Earlier, the influence of missionary work could be noticed in almost every facet and aspect of Khasi society, while the basic foundations remained more or less unchanged. Matrilineal system, taboos regarding marriage and during pregnancy, social organisation, etc. remained more or less the same. In other aspects have undergone total or partial change. The missionaries gave the Khasis the Bible, the consequent literature, and raised them to a higher level of knowledge and understanding. In the field of medicine, hygiene, music, diet, economic development, introduction of new crafts and skills, removal of superstitious myths, superstitions and fears, affluence, and widening of outlook and development of self-reliance and confidence among the Khasis, Christianity stands out as the prime mover and major factor. The process of conversion still goes apace despite the withdrawal of foreign missionaries and inflow of foreign missionaries. The evidence in the Khasi Hills to show that no unfair methods, force or coercion were used in conversions. On the contrary, when they

, many superficial aspects of the Khasi M questioned; this provided a good gr religion. Further, the Christian mission minds of the people through their heal ble humanitarian service. The fact that ace of the rulers also made them 'status d from any standpoint, the work of e Khasi Hills has done incalculable good direction of the Khasi society today co ent.

in the highly resilient Khasi society, r versions and latent forces of pride in t re and tradition were provoked and ant *Seng Khasi* movement to revive old led the growth of Christianity and in so l the missionary endeavours. With the on assisting in the process of inculc ous outlook and a sense of being part of Khasi ethos and world view have been urther, the synthesis of all the influer onary work has brought about a signific i society and culture and has helped re vant and superficial values that had to be xt of the modern, rational world and at t ned the substantial core factors in the soci e preserved and nurtured. Thus, a mo y of the present day has emerged.

The present Khasi society depicts differ ornisation, a second of a leap backwards i ancient Khasi culture and another towa ing from the efforts of Ramakrishna M ss of integration with the rest of th co-socio-economic fields.

The western influence on the Khasi soc forms such as dress, a distinct regar ence of the westerner or the 'white-sk rn names and modes of behaviour, we e, etc. Thanks to improved communic ally superior western civilisation has made on the Khasis.

under arduous conditions in these areas. The extraordinary zeal and a greater sense of mission purpose compared to the local missionaries has led to the view that there is an inherent and some justification for the foreigners in the Indian subcontinent. The criticism about missionary activity aimed at them is touched upon. A few missionaries in the past in the Khasi Hills, were suspected of anti-tribe activity among the tribals. Demands for autonomy and violence in the Naga and Mizo Hills were in many circles, to be the result of a feeling of neglect from the rest of the country among the north-east, due to foreign missionary preaching. There might have been such individual anti-missionary work in these parts but these were the later day missionaries. Such anti-intellectualism have arisen out of a sense of a reflex reaction against attacks on missionary activity and there are not two such instances in the long history of the hills cannot be held to act as a major slur on the history of beneficial work done by the missionaries. A few thoughts on the future of Khasis are given. The society was kin-oriented; common blood ties were the other's allegiance. The earlier village community was a face society, implying that all members were known to one another. The village was considered as a cohesive unit and a single religious unit. A common bond uniting all the Khasis was the material wants few. The scene has now changed. Associated with the technical and material changes in the Khasi Hills, as it has affected the corresponding change in the attitudes, thought and behaviour of the people who are affected. The arrival of a new religion brought in further changes. Material changes are more subtle, gradual and frequent developments much deeper than the changes of material and technical improvements. The society has absorbed some of these changes. The old way of life in the villages administered by the community is even between siblings. An individual

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in terms more of himself and the newly extended family unit and not of the larger family or community. Thanks to increasing rapport among different groups there is now more harmony in a family of members adhering to different sects. The changes have led to the earlier sureness of folkways and successful habits of nearly four centuries of possession of the Khasis, being shaken. Absolute independence, social equality and a good work persist and can be usefully harnessed as part of Khasi culture, the skills, insight and ability understood and nurtured for being channelised for the benefit of the Khasis.

Restoration of native interests and ethos must be a concern of the Government as economic progress must be reinforced by new sources of prestige and prestige have disappeared. Education is training the Khasis for a new type of fast-changing world where traditional values still count. Otherwise, the old will be shattered and substituted by undesirable and destructive ideologies. The 'ethos' of a people is built up on the basis of interdependence. Since interdependence is inevitable for the survival and the progress of all, progress, for, it is an important factor in culture. When missionaries withdraw from the scene and welfare agencies of the Government take over, there is need to train officials in such a manner that the people some, if not the same, of the care and attention that the missionaries displayed lest there be neglect and frustration. Social and spiritual values are more important and potent than material benefits. It holds good with regard to all governments that they must embrace more and more aspects of development. It would be useful to harness the knowledge, skill and winning ways of the missionaries in the past. As the foreign missionary activity in the Khasis is declining and the policy of all the denominations is towards replacement of foreign

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n personnel, there is need to ensure that this is maintained by replacing trained foreign persons equally well-trained. Care should be taken to employ specialists capable of understanding the situation in. But, exceptions could also be made for missionaries who have worked for long years in the area and bona fides are not suspect, so that they could continue in these areas and bring to bear on the development their very valuable knowledge and experience. Missionaries played a vital and useful role in the development of the society. It would be an expensive step to replace them abruptly.

In taking over the work of missionaries, care should be taken to see that the transition is made smoothly. A complete break with the past will tantamount to a radical surgery for the tribals and this will be detrimental to healthy growth. In socio-economic activities, the Government and voluntary bodies should work in unison to deliver things as to communicate ideas. The primary aim is to help the developmental activities, to enable the people to help themselves. Opportunities should be created more important than alms. It is by a psychological orientation that the people feel that they themselves are the agents of growth, that a sense of belonging and identity is created. This psychological orientation is essential for generating growth and will bring confidence and optimism instead of uncertainty, confusion and low morale which can result from an over-bearing approach. In the changing context of the Khasi Hills, development work can succeed without rapport which is essential for character formation, continuity, self-discipline and growth. Ideas and procedures should also be adapted to the needs and capacities of the people. For example, the hours of school work so adjusted that not a wide gap is maintained between theoretical studies and practical work. Also available human hands could be used to the best advantage.

In the setting of the Khasi Hills the vital

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Khasi and his land cannot be over-emphasised. Sociologists such as Margaret Mead have often criticised the unabashed, and unplanned exploitation of the poor. But too has said: 'The relation between the dominant and the dominated at no time can break the bond of mutual dependence. The dominated stand at an advantage in that they can learn from the mistakes of developed areas; for they are still in the process of development. At present, some Khasi elite are moving towards modern societies and two not merely different types of societies'. Hence, economic schemes and social policies should be of a balanced nature based on the relation between the Khasi and their surroundings.

Arising out of this study of the role of missionaries in the Khasi, some generalisations can be attempted. The important questions posed in the overall study are: (1) Institutions established by the missionaries are still relevant in this country, whether in the field of education, health, or others. The elite in the country, including political leaders, even today consider missionary education as a symbol to send children to missionary schools. (2) Because of the high quality of education imparted, it is a matter of enquiry that such institutions imparted a better education than the vast amount earmarked by the Government for education, the missionaries spend very little money. (3) The success achieved and why is there so much success? (4) We readily use the words 'missionary education' and 'missionary work' when we exhort people to undertake any work. (5) The success arises from our inherent admiration for the missionary work of the missionaries. The missionaries approached their task with great humility and without any sense of superiority. Their technique was psychological, approaching the minds of the people and without undue pressures that might have caused resistance. They were above all patient in their work. The standing success they have achieved is a result of the effectiveness of their techniques. Today, in India, we are faced with the problem of economic growth. We want to increase the number of schools and factories. Changes formerly required

ries are compressed within short intervals. All work is done at top speed. The task is to match the speed of the modern Government employs a large army of extension workers and spends colossal sums for ushers and clerks. The results, admittedly, are not very satisfactory. Does the solution to the problems lie in the use of all sociological assets and requirements of the community? Can a proper approach could be formulated for higher productivity and quicker results? While the basic goals of the planning are laudable, they fail in translation of ideas due to poor communication? What magic chord is the key to elicit responsive answers to a lone missionary in the vastness of the gamut of governmental machinery is unanswerable? Do we tend to be very academic in our approach and bring a drab uniform approach to every problem? We have left us a legacy of an impersonal bureaucracy which stood neutral between individuals and the state. The sense of justice in the community but the lack of standards cannot be effective in motivating the achievement of defined goals. This may sound somewhat hackneyed but that does not change the nature and basic character of the problem. The answer must be found to this and the painful process of socialisation and industrialisation, such as de-Indianisation, and resulting social disintegration. Social change should be directed as a part of economic growth and not left to chance.

In this task, specialists like professional sociologists, economists and others should be employed to ensure that distortions in Khasi society are avoided. Corrections are possible where necessary. The missionaries, as seen in this dissertation, seemed to lack many of these qualities in himself and a strong set-up, sources of psychological motivation. At the best heavy odds may yet provide many useful

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Glossary

(Note: Words arranged in Khasi alphabetical order)

Khasi	English	Khasi	English
A			
<i>ai</i>	give	<i>khadduh</i>	youngest daughter
<i>apot</i>	misfortune	<i>khaw kham</i>	handful of rice
<i>awria</i>	licentious	<i>kham</i>	handful
		<i>khein</i>	divination
		<i>khoh</i>	round
B			
<i>ba</i>	that	<i>khrong</i>	native basket
<i>bakha</i>	cousin		beg, levy, collect
<i>basan</i>	state official in K & J Hills, an elder	<i>khuri</i>	cup
<i>Bhoi</i>	Khasis living in the low land, north part of Khasi-Jaintia Hills.	<i>khublei</i>	God bless, etc.
		<i>kyrwang</i>	stripe, cloth stripes
<i>birta</i>	amusement	<i>khynriam</i>	people living in Khasi areas
<i>Biskorom</i>	god of iron	<i>kiad</i>	alcohol, drink
<i>Blei</i>	God	<i>ki</i>	they
<i>briew</i>	person	<i>kitab</i>	book
K			
		<i>klim</i>	commit adultery
<i>ka</i>	She	<i>kmie</i>	mother
<i>kaviraj</i>	a person who gives herbal medicine	<i>kmierad</i>	grandmother
<i>kha</i>	born, father's sister	<i>kot</i>	book
		<i>kpa</i>	father
		<i>ksuid-khrei</i>	devil, evil spirits
		<i>kur</i>	relatives close

Khasi	English	Khasi	English
<i>si</i>	in-law		ceremony
<i>rwoh</i>	information, message		feast (esp. of pork)
<i>mbat</i>	herb	<i>law kyntang</i>	sacred fore
	D	<i>Lei hukum</i>	goddess gives order
<i>char</i>	plains people		world
<i>wai</i>	medicine	<i>longing</i>	family
<i>ei</i>	ashes	<i>Lukhumai</i>	goddess of
<i>ma</i>	tobacco	<i>Lyngdoh</i>	priest
<i>r</i>	picture, diagram, figure, form	<i>Lyngngam</i>	Khasi hi (inhabiting the Khasi
	NG		
<i>uh</i>	bow, pay homage		M
	H	<i>Marangbah</i>	eldest n uncle
<i>na</i>	state	<i>mawlong-</i>	
<i>kum</i>	order, command	<i>mawteh</i>	great rook
	I	<i>mawbah</i>	big cromle ancestral b pository
<i>v</i>	mature, old	<i>mawbynna</i>	memorial s
<i>chalai</i>	gambling	<i>maw-</i>	
<i>rbei</i>	female ancestor	<i>shyrang</i>	dolmen, s stone
<i>vduh</i>	Biggest market (Shillong)	<i>maw-</i>	
<i>r</i>	house, family	<i>kynthei</i>	large flat s slab suppo four small set on end spirit, soul
	J		
<i>d</i>	kind, kin, clan		
<i>nsem</i>	female garment	<i>mynsiem</i>	
<i>gkhan</i>	egg used in a divination		N
<i>ang</i>	covenant	<i>niam</i>	religion
	L	<i>niamra</i>	abyss, hell
<i>ndoh</i>	celebrate a age	<i>norigknia</i>	one who sacrifice s

Khasi	English	Khasi	
<i>han</i>	diviner	<i>ri-kur</i>	land
<i>lam</i>	leader		belong
<i>lab</i>	preacher		clan
<i>ha</i>	sacrifice one-self for the sake of others	<i>rishot</i> <i>ri-shyieng</i>	pillar land the
	a seed of a plant which the Khasis used to wash their with in the early days		daugh area) for re monie
<i>ong</i>	first	<i>riti</i>	establi toms
P			S
<i>r</i>	folk story, legend	<i>sang</i>	taboo
<i>g</i>	generation	<i>seng</i>	estab
<i>ng</i>	foreigner (Euro- pean or English)		by fo
<i>ar</i>	couplet	<i>shad</i>	organ
<i>um-</i>		<i>shnong</i>	dance
<i>vah</i>	household gods	<i>sohpirah</i>	villag
<i>tyrpad</i>	household deity which blesses the family	<i>spah</i>	a fru wash wealt comf
	make a ritual feast for the dead	<i>suid kiad</i>	tente pour coho
<i>lang</i>	goat sacrifice sin	<i>Suid- rangbah Syiem</i>	chief King Quee
R			rule,
<i>n</i>	country	<i>synshar</i>	
<i>id</i>	hill place		T
	common land, State land, public land	<i>tap kpoh</i>	the s safe
<i>nti</i>	a private landed property	<i>Thawlang</i>	first gran

	English	Khasi
	evil spirit supposed to turn a disease (measles) for the worst husband	<i>Wahadadar</i>
	owner, master, lord	<i>War</i>
	betel-leaf, pan leaf	

U

he
well where sacrifices and oaths are performed

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